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# OLD COLONY MENNONITE SETTLEMENTS IN SASKATCHEWAN: A STUDY IN SETTLEMENT CHANGE

by

RICHARD JOHN FRIESEN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE

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MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1975

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Old Colony Mennonite Settlements in Saskatchewan: A Study in Settlement Change submitted by Richard John Friesen in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## ABSTRACT

The Mennonite religion has its origins in the Protestant Reformation and more precisely, in the Swiss Anabaptist movement. Radical departures from the accepted beliefs resulted in persecution of the Anabaptists, which resulted in the spread of the belief to other parts of sixteenth century Europe. The leadership of a Dutch priest, Menno Simon, unified a group of Anabaptists, who became known as Mennonites.

Persecution, in the Netherlands, forced a considerable number of Mennonites to migrate to the Vistula Delta in Poland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Political changes, resultant from the partition of Poland in 1772, brought the Mennonites under Prussian control. The pacifist Mennonites were no longer tolerated and thus sought refuge in the Russian Ukraine at the invitation of Catherine the Great.

The Mennonites, while in Prussia, had established a social organization and settlement form, which promoted and complemented the religious isolationism they desired. Under the direction of the Russian Colonial Law, these nucleated agricultural settlements and their associated open field systems were re-established in a condition of imposed social isolation, which fostered the development of the Mennonite ethnic identity.

Subsequent political changes in Russia in the 1860's and 1870's resulted in the suspension of the special rights enjoyed by Mennonites in their isolated settlements. As a result of this, nearly eight thousand Mennonites migrated to the two reserves of land in southern

Manitoba, having procured from the government of Canada special rights regarding their religious beliefs and method of settlement.

The nucleated agricultural settlements established by the Mennonites were a marked deviation from the individual farmsteads envisioned under the Dominion Lands Act of 1872. Due to the inability of this settlement system to adapt to the evolving commercial grain industry of the Canadian West, and in part due to the conflicts within the Mennonite group, the agricultural villages and the associated open field system disintegrated, leaving relatively few of the original villages intact.

During this upheaval, two daughter colonies were established in the Rosthern Reserve in 1895 and in the Swift Current Reserve in 1906. The settlement pattern was reproduced, minus the open field system of agriculture. It was found that the villages in these later settlements showed a higher survival rate than their counterparts in the Manitoba Reserves. This was due to a number of factors, including a strong desire, on the part of the migrating conservative faction, to maintain a unique life style and its complementary village settlements. The survival was also attributable to government direction via the "Hamlet Clause" of the Dominion Lands Act, and by changes in land tenure and village administration.

Many of the villages are now finding it convenient to seek legal status as a hamlet. Therefore, they have had their village lands surveyed and the subdivisions legally deeded to the individual village members. This most recent trend seems to be lending a permanence to an unusual settlement form that finds its origins in Medieval Europe.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study arises out of one observed deviation from the dispersed settlement pattern which characterizes the vast majority of agriculturally settled land in the Prairie Provinces. The settlements in question are located in two areas of Saskatchewan. The older of the two is located in the northern part of the province, about thirty miles northeast of Saskatoon, centered in the area between the hamlets of Osler and Hague. The second area and younger of the two is located about fifteen miles southeast of Swift Current (see Figure 1).

The deviation in question was a result of the settlement in these two areas by Old Colony Mennonites from Manitoba, and to a lesser extent, from the Russian Ukraine and the United States. The resultant settlement pattern was agglomerated as opposed to the dispersed pattern which was characteristic of most of the area occupied under the Dominion Lands Act. One can readily distinguish the areas in question from the surrounding areas in terms of settlement form and pattern by the presence of the strassendorf or long street villages. This particular settlement pattern has been characteristic of areas settled by Mennonites since the eighteenth century. As will

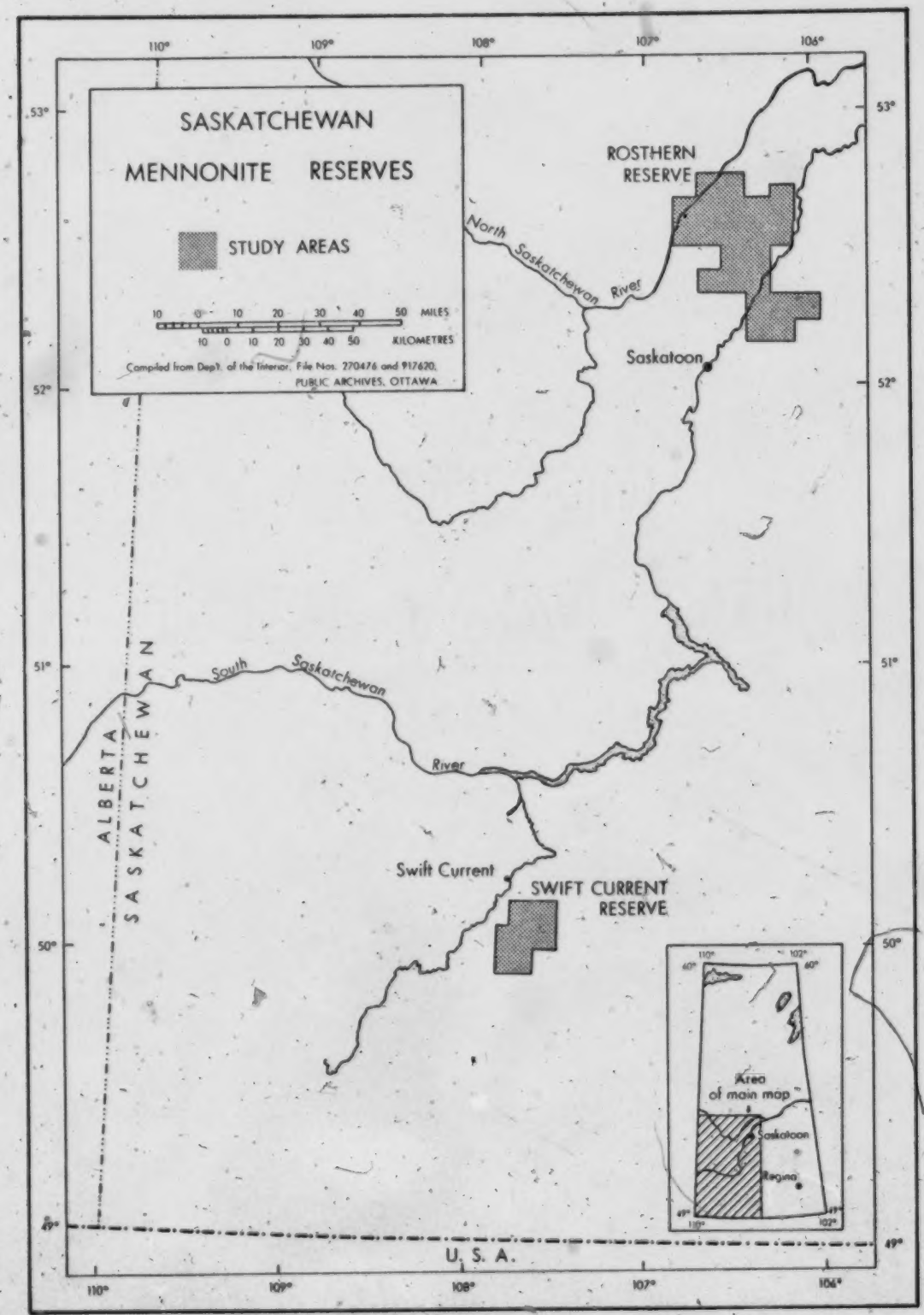

SASKATCHEWAN
MENNONITE RESERVES
STUDY AREAS
10 0 10 20 30 40 50 MILES
10 0 10 20 30 40 50 KILOMETRES
Compiled from Dept. of the Interior, File Nos. 270476 and 917620,
PUBLIC ARCHIVES, OTTAWA
ROSTHERN RESERVE
North Saskatchewan River
Saskatoon
South Saskatchewan River
ALBERTA
SASKATCHEWAN
Swift Current
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE
Area of main map
Saskatoon
Regina
U. S. A.
110°
109°
108°
107°
106°
53°
52°
51°
50°
49°

Figure 1

be discussed later, it was introduced after the migration to Russia from Prussia.

Preliminary research established that the settlements located in the two areas mentioned above were formed as off-shoots of the older colonies established in Manitoba in 1872. The migration from Manitoba to Saskatchewan occurred around the turn of the century with the major movements, in terms of numbers, occurring in 1897 and 1906. The movement involved a group of people with well-established values, social structure, and spatial organization.

The problem is multifaceted. An attempt will be made to determine the way in which the "settling" of the land took place - in other words, an examination of the settlement process for the Saskatchewan Mennonite colonies. Field work has established the extent to which the settlement pattern and form were transferred from Manitoba to Saskatchewan. From previous studies of the Manitoba settlements, one finds that substantial and far-reaching changes occurred as a result of the transference of the peasant economy from Russia to Canada.[1] This development will be discussed later. The changes resulted in fragmentation of the peasant economy and the spatial aspect of village form and land use patterns.

One can formulate an hypothesis on the basis of evidence available. One recognizes repeated migrations and subsequent relocation of the characteristic settlements in Russia and Manitoba. One sees that the Manitoba Colonies established semi-communal agricultural villages. These villages and the associated economy quickly suffered fragmentation due to contact with the larger society and the adoption of the commercial grain economy.

Given the above situation, one would assume that some change in organization and structure of these Old World settlements should have occurred to allow the re-establishment of this peculiar settlement form in Saskatchewan. Furthermore, it was established within the same economic environment that aided its destruction in Manitoba. In addition, one must realize that the daughter colonies were established during the period of major upheaval in the Manitoba settlement pattern.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that the settlement form known to the Mennonites in Manitoba underwent a change in its actual physical form, or a reorganization of administration to allow it to be re-established in the Saskatchewan Reserves on a more secure and permanent basis.

The subsequent problems are to determine if a change in Mennonite community organization occurred, and if so, to what extent that change was manifest in the landscape; to determine why the change occurred, examining the internal and external forces responsible; to determine how the modification influenced the survival of the peculiar settlement form to the present day; and finally, as a related but lesser point, to determine if, and how, the above relates to modification in social structure and local governmental form.

In summary, the problem is to examine to what extent the Old Colony Mennonite sect migrating from the mother colonies in Manitoba to the two daughter colonies in Saskatchewan were obliged to modify their spatial arrangements in order to maintain the desired way of life. In this study, an attempt will be made to examine a particular case of geographic change through time and place.

## SOURCES AND METHODS

Research in geographical change presents the researcher with some special problems, in that it requires reconstruction of past landscapes. Historical research often encounters problems; these problems are compounded by the addition of the geographical approach. Perhaps the most limiting problem is the accessability of material. Source material does not necessarily await the researcher in the libraries and archives, nor will field work necessarily bring all of the required data to the fore. Thus the hypothesis often hangs in the balance as data simply is not available to prove or disprove the postulate.

In the case of this study, the size of the study area, which was determined by the boundaries of the Mennonite reserves, presented a special problem. The area under study consisted of more than one thousand square miles. This made it impossible to do detailed field work over the entire area. This presented the first limitation to the scope of the study. Additionally, the study area comprised two areas separated by almost two hundred miles. There was also the fact that the areas were settled in 1895 and 1906, thus bracketing the granting of provincial status to the province of Saskatchewan within whose boundaries the Mennonite reserves were located. These latter two factors tended to obscure records and confuse the systematic search of historical documents.

Apart from the above, the areas under investigation formed parts of seven different municipalities. Furthermore, the spatial phenomenon being studied, the Old World settlement pattern, proved early in the research to be the fabric of a relatively small portion of the larger Mennonite religious group. The agent of this fabric was the

traditionalists or conservative Mennonites now commonly termed "Old Colony" Mennonites. This subgroup is not differentiated in census data, provincial records, nor in municipal records. Thus, the lack of detailed governmental records impeded the collection of information on significant characteristics that can be observed by field work, yet require documentation. Bearing these points in mind, one encounters difficulty in maintaining detailed and consistent patterns in the reconstruction of past landscapes.

It was decided to concentrate the focus of this study on determining if a change occurred in the settlement form and social organization during the course of the establishment of Mennonite villages in Saskatchewan. With relative ease, it was determined that the land occupied by the Mennonites was previously nearly vacant and thus in its natural state. Similarly, the present geography of both reserves was determined with relative ease.

Once in the field, it became apparent that information could be collected and verified most effectively by a series of alternating periods of field work and documentary searches. In this way, the two sources of information were used in a complementary fashion by following up various directions and verification of data.

Interviews in themselves provided much useful information, as well as forming a chain reaction that preceeded one's physical presence to the villages. Participants often knew of the study well in advance of being contacted and thus had time to compile written lists of details about the past landscapes, methods, and activities. As well, these people often suggested other contacts and most were willing to allow an examination of photographs and artifacts from

earlier periods. In this way, a substantial number of pioneers were able to supply much background information about life in the villages, farming practises, crops, mechanization, trading centers, building types and methods, village plans, and village organization.

Several of the participants had arrived in the study area during childhood and had lived their entire lives there. These interviews proved valuable in cross-referencing dates and events with other people, as well as with documents and newspaper reports. Repeated visits to particularly informative participants proved helpful in the interpretation of various points. Interviewing one or more of these "old timers" at the same time proved somewhat less than advantageous, in that differences of opinion and disagreements about the sequence of events generally used valuable time while little of use could be gained. On the other hand, private guided tours of the reserves and old village sites provided actual sketches of past landscapes.

Newspapers proved a valuable source of information in that they often gave an "outsider's" view of the Mennonite way of life. The major newspapers of Regina and Saskatoon carried numerous accounts of the controversial issues surrounding the Mennonites, such as the 1920's school question. These accounts, as well as many editorials, provided a valuable dating technique and more accurate accounts of the numbers of people involved in both the migration to Mexico and the emigration from Russia to Canada. In some cases, they provided accounts of conditions at the time of settlement, which proved invaluable. In addition, the occasional article dealing with the Mennonite village appearance aided one in the development of an impression of

the past landscapes and way of life.

In a similar vein, accounts of various travels through the Mennonite Reserves presented considerable information about the actual conditions and appearance of Mennonite villages. The contributions came from a wide cross-section of people, ranging from early surveyors, to school inspectors, to provincial ministers of education and agriculture, and to the premier of Saskatchewan.

Public records provided one with invaluable information about the actual occupation of the reserves. The land surveyors' reports were examined when they could be obtained. The annual reports of the departments responsible for the interior, agriculture, and immigration were searched for information about the geography of the reserves. These papers are held by the Public Archives in Ottawa, and by the Saskatchewan Archives Board in Regina and Saskatoon. There are files containing most of the original records and correspondence concerning the negotiations for the land, problems encountered in occupation of the land, and special requests for village habitation. These and various other collections and reports were invaluable in the re-construction of the landscape of the early settlement period. The Mennonite villagers also kept records as part of the village administration, which helped immensely in understanding certain ways of doing things, and the actual conditions under which people lived.

Among the most important sources of spatial information were the maps and air photos used. Air photo coverage of the Swift Current Reserve was acquired in full, while for the Rosthern Reserve, only the area containing villages was obtained. In this latter core, only about half of the actual reserve area was examined on air photo

coverage. The air photos date from the late 1950's and early 1960's, and thus allowed comparison with the 1974 patterns, as well as allowing accurate mapping and location of present and past village sites. Maps, on the other hand, proved less valuable for large scale and detailed information. Relevant maps in the Public Archives, in the provincial archives of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, in the libraries of the University of Saskatchewan, and in the respective municipality offices, were examined and provided information about the geography of the reserves and their surrounding areas.

Field work was carried out in an unusual way, in that it not only contributed to the geographic study, but also to a project conducted on behalf of the Saskatchewan Department of Culture and Youth. This project, entitled "Towards a New Past", required that pioneers be interviewed and taped as part of an archival collection of tapes and historical data about the experiences of various ethnic and religious groups in Saskatchewan. As a result of searching out participants for the "Towards a New Past" project, many people were interviewed and many miles of road were covered to the benefit of the geographical reconstruction.

Field observations also brought to light information about the man-made landscape. All the presently discernible villages were visited, village lots and streets were measured, and the general lay-out was noted. Structures were examined, measured, and construction dates were ascertained, allowing a sequence of construction methods to be developed.

Field work and documentary research were carried on alternately, checking data and following up new leads. In this way, changes in

the geography of the villages were noted and explained.

CHAPTER ONE

FOOTNOTES

[1]The work of John Warkentin and E. K. Francis into the historical geography and social history of the Manitoba Mennonite Colonies has been particularly significant.

## CHAPTER TWO

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### INTRODUCTION

The "Old Colony" Mennonites and their settlements represent one deviation from the isolated farmstead characteristic of the quarter-section homestead scheme of settlement. The Old Colony Mennonites are an integral part of this study. It is the settlement pattern achieved by these people, its origin and evolution, that is to be examined. It is important, therefore, to deal with the historical and cultural development of the group that came to be distinguished as Old Colony Mennonites.

With few exceptions, the land of the Canadian West was divided by the township and range survey system which had as the basic unit the one square mile section of land, of which one quarter-section and an option to purchase the adjoining quarter-section were allocated to would-be settlers under the terms of the Homestead Act of 1872. This system tended to encourage dispersed settlement patterns by requiring each would-be settler to fulfill the residence and improvement conditions on his own quarter-section homestead.

The dispersed settlement which accompanied individual farmsteads was not the pattern with which the Mennonites were familiar in the

Russian Ukraine. Rather, the traditional Mennonite settlement comprised a linear village plan, termed a Strassendorf, with a communal open field economy.[1] This pattern of settlement, method of land allocation, and way of farming, were then in direct contrast to the pattern envisaged under the township and range survey system.

At the present time, Old Colony Mennonite village settlements are limited to the southern part of Manitoba[2] and two smaller areas in Saskatchewan. The Old Colonist settlements in Saskatchewan are located north of Saskatoon in the Hague-Osler area and south of Swift Current in the vicinity of the hamlet of Wymark (see Figure 1).

Old Colony Mennonite concentrations exist in other areas of Canada as well but without the Old World village settlement pattern, as at Aylmer in southern Ontario, Matheson in northern Ontario south of James Bay, and Rainy Lake in the Lake-of-the-Woods area of Ontario. In addition to the above-mentioned, there are Old Colony Mennonites located in the Fort Vermillion area of Alberta and in the Fort St. John area of British Columbia. Although these areas are characterized by Old Colony Mennonite settlement, they lack the village pattern which characterizes the settlements of southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

## THE OLD COLONY MENNONITES

The Mennonites are a religious group tracing its origins back to the Protestant Reformation. Since that time. the Mennonites as a group have been subject to varying degrees of persecution. The infringement by the larger society on what Mennonite society conceives to be the foundations of the group identity has led to mass migrations

and colonization in virtually every corner of the world. The character of the Saskatchewan settlement study areas is in part attributable to the Mennonite historical cultural heritage.

The Mennonite religious group had its beginnings in the Swiss Anabaptist movement, which in turn had its beginnings with a group of Zwinglian students, foremost of whom was Conrad Grebel. Grebel lent his considerable support to the Zwinglian reformation after his conversion and rejection of the Roman Catholic Church in 1522.[3]

Grebel and his small group of supporters slowly came to represent the radical wing of Zwinglian reformation. In general, they supported the Zwinglian school of thought, advocating the rejection of infant baptism in favour of adult baptism upon confession of faith. The espousal of adult baptism in conjunction with abolition of mass in the Christian church rituals was further than Zwingli and the Council of the Canton of Zurich were willing to go. Thus, Grebel and a small body of supporters broke with the Zwinglians to form what was called Anabaptism, the forerunner of the Mennonite religious group.[4]

The Anabaptists were persecuted as the "rebaptizers" and as heretics.[5] The leaders were executed, imprisoned, and driven out of Zurich. Anabaptism spread rapidly beyond the Canton of Zurich to the rest of Switzerland, and still further afield to South Germany, Tyrol, Austria and Moravia. By 1530, it had found support in the regions of the upper Danube and upper Rhine, as well as in the Netherlands and northeastern Germany.[6]

To this point, the movement was largely confined to the large urban and commercial centers of Europe. As support grew, persecution

and intolerance increased, eventually forcing its adherents to seek refuge in the rural areas. The Anabaptist movement was thus forced under cover and its spread was halted temporarily by the ruthless execution of many of its members and of many of its most prominent leaders.[7]

The harassment and subsequent spread of the Anabaptist movement caused it to come to the attention of a Roman Catholic priest in Holland. Menno Simon was a contemporary of Luther and Calvin, and like these reformers, found fault with the established Roman Catholic church. Thus the Dutch Anabaptists, led by Menno Simon, called themselves Mennonites, a name which slowly became common to many Anabaptist groups.[8] This rather insignificant group of reformists lacked the support of a powerful individual or of any state government so that it was subjected to persecution from the various state governments, as well as the Roman Catholic church and the newly-organized Protestant churches.[9]

The first recognized general meeting of Mennonites occurred in 1538 when Menno Simon and a small group of co-religionists met to draw up the principles of their belief. This meeting resulted in the establishment of a "creed" which was formally published nearly one hundred years later, at the Conference of Dort in 1632. This statement tended to act as a force of unification, drawing together the various factions developing within the Mennonite dogma.

The dogma adherred to by the Mennonites is characterized by a number of tenets, the maintenance of which have caused the Mennonites to migrate in search of a favourable social environment. The Mennonites believe in the practice of adult baptism upon the

confession of faith. They believe in the maintenance of a peaceful life and therefore see no need to partake in civil government and law enforcement duties. By the same token, they abstain totally from the swearing of official oaths. The Mennonites are professed pacifists, and therefore have refused military service.[10] It is their isolationist attitude and their refusal to do military service that has been instrumental in the numerous migrations, to be discussed later. In addition to the above, the Mennonites advocated a democratic structure in the church, with elected clergy, all of which was in contrast to the established churches of the time.

It was because of the revolutionary ideas expressed in their doctrine that the Mennonites were rejected by the Roman Catholic church as well as by the emerging Protestant churches.

After the death of Menno Simon in 1561, the Mennonite numbers grew rapidly, and the group as a whole flourished. The prosperity enjoyed by the Dutch Mennonites was due in large measure to a short period of religious toleration in the Netherlands, beginning in 1577. This period of growth and spread of the Mennonite doctrine ensured the establishment and survival of the Mennonites as a religious group in the Netherlands.

## SURVEY OF MIGRATIONS

As the status of the Mennonites was low in terms of influential support and power, they were subjected to persecution which resulted in group migration to various countries in search of the ideal freedom. This sequence of migrations finally brought the Mennonites to Canada.

The attacks of the counter-reformationists on the growing Dutch Mennonite congregations in the early sixteenth century, previous to the period of tolerance near the end of the century, drove the Mennonites to seek refuge in Poland, and to a lesser extent, in East Prussia.[11] Previous to the death of Menno Simon in the mid-sixteenth century, the persecution of the Dutch Mennonites had caused many of their number to migrate to Poland with the goal of enjoying freedom from oppression and persecution.

For the most part, the Mennonites settled in the Vistula-Nogat River Deltas area in Poland. To this point, the Mennonites were neither urban nor rural, but comprised elements of both. Although the merchants and artisans settled in the urban centers, especially in Danzig, the Mennonite farmers settled in the unoccupied swampland along the Vistula River (see Figure 2). As they were skilled in the building of dykes and the draining of swampland, they soon created productive farmland from the previously useless swamps. The success with which the Mennonite farmers developed a thriving agricultural economy caused the land-owning nobles to encourage further Mennonite migration with the offer of religious freedom, full control of their own churches, replacement of the sworn oath with a simple affirmation, and the promise of freedom from military service.[12]

As early as 1534, the numbers of persecuted Anabaptists arriving in Danzig from the Low Countries was enough to cause an outcry against them.[13] Subsequent persecution drove many more of the Mennonites in Poland into East Prussia where the Reformation found a measure of acceptance. From 1547 to 1550, the movement of Mennonites into the Danzig-Vistula Delta area was increased

KINGDOM OF NORWAY AND DENMARK
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
NORTH SEA
BALTIC SEA
DOMINION OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER
RUSSIA
Memel
Memel River
Nogat River
Danzig
PRUSSIA
HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE
Vistula River
LITHUANIA
POLAND
Cracow
POLISH BOUNDARIES 1772
SWEDEN
BALTIC SEA
RUSSIA
WEST PRUSSIA
PRUSSIA
Warsaw
POLAND
Vistula River
AUSTRIA
RUSSIA
100 Miles
POLAND
MENNONITE SETTLEMENTS
( of the 16th century )
Mennonite Settlement Areas
100 50 0 100 MILES
100 50 0 100
SOURCE: MENNONITE ENCYCLOPEDIA, Volume 2, page 382

Figure 2

and their establishment became permanent.[14] With the substantial increase in the numbers of Mennonites, it becomes possible to refer to the Mennonites as an established religious group in the Danzig area.

In 1613, the question of non-resistance was raised for the first time in the Danzig area. The Mennonites refused military service on conscientious grounds and received an exemption by virtue of the payment of a monetary substitute.[15]

The group solidarity created by the question of non-resistance was enhanced by the development of a fire insurance scheme which provided for the sharing of cost in loss of building and livelihood in the case of fire. Appreciation of group solidarity is essential in understanding the nature of settlements established later in both Russia and in North America.

By the time this group solidarity began to manifest itself, the Mennonites had occupied various areas in Poland and Prussia for nearly one hundred years.[16] Much to the approval of their overlords, they had turned previously useless swamp into vital farmland with the skillful employment of dykes, windmills, and numerous drainage ditches.[17] Nevertheless, the position of the Mennonites had been precarious from the beginning of their movement from the Netherlands. They were constantly subjected to monetary demands to maintain the privilege of military exemption. Moreover, the land available for settlement of the growing population of agricultural Mennonites was in short supply.

Some years later, in 1724, Frederick William I of East Prussia, in order to maintain his militaristic policy, ordered the pacifist

Mennonites out of East Prussia. Mennonites who earlier had migrated into East Prussia to the Memel River Delta, now moved back into Poland, putting more pressure on the land shortage in the Danzig Region. This shortage was temporarily alleviated by the purchase of single farming units scattered throughout the Danzig area (see Figure 2).

During the course of history, the narrow corridor joining the bulk of Poland to the city of Danzig and the Baltic Sea, containing within its limits the Vistula Delta and the large group of Mennonites under discussion, has changed hands several times due to partition of Poland by Prussia and Austria. After the first partition of 1772, the area containing most of the Mennonite settlements came under the control of Frederick the Great of Prussia. The old privileges and exemptions were initially renewed. However, the renewal of freedom and toleration was short-lived as Frederick the Great pursued a policy of militarizing the Prussian states begun by Frederick William I. Thus the atmosphere was not conducive to the development of the pacifist Mennonites.

In addition to the ideological conflicts, jealousy and superstition were aroused in the neighbouring Prussians by the wealth and prosperity of the Mennonite farmers. The Lutheran clergy pressured the government to put restrictions on the religious activities of the Mennonites, as they were converting whole Lutheran congregations to the Anabaptist cause.[19] The sum of the above conditions consequently led to the revival of thoughts of migration as the solution to the onslaught of persecution, as it had when the Mennonites originally fled the Netherlands for what later became

Prussia.

The Mennonites in Prussia established group settlements in which interaction with other groups was limited. They enjoyed a certain measure of local autonomy within the agricultural settlements, but the threat of constant persecutions and of infringement upon their ideological tenets made Prussia undesirable.[20]

The only apparent solution lay in migration to a country that would allow the existence of a pacifist agricultural people. Thanks to an amazing historical coincidence, the Prussian Mennonites were able to begin a mass movement to the South Russian Ukraine.

The historical coincidence was twofold. First, Catherine the Great of Russia had newly acquired land from Turkey in what is the southern part of the modern-day Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.[21] Second, as earlier had been the case with the Prussian nobility, Catherine was desirous of settling an industrious agricultural people on these newly acquired lands. Therefore, Catherine made generous promises to the land-seeking Mennonites. The Mennonites were offered free transportation, loans to establish factories and industries, religious toleration with freedom to establish and control their school system, and their own form of local government. As well as the above, they were promised exemption from military service, which would allow them to maintain pacifist status, which was essential to their religious beliefs.[22]

The conditions offered by Catherine were attractive to many Germans of various religions, as well as to the persecuted Prussian Mennonites.

During the period from 1787 to 1865, the entire surplus

population of Prussian Mennonites migrated to the Ukraine. This is proven by the fact that the Mennonites in Prussia did not increase numerically.[23] This also indicates that the ban on the acquisition of new land by Mennonites was strictly enforced, thus forcing the growing population to leave Prussia.

The first settlement of Prussian Mennonites in the steppes of the Ukraine was made in 1789 at the confluence of the Dnieper and Chortitza Rivers (see Figure 3), and the colony was named for the latter river. The name Chortitza and variations of it continued to appear in many of the New World colonies as an indication of their origins.

In 1804, the second colony of Molotschna was established on the Molotschna River. In 1853 and 1861, respectively, colonies were established at Saratow and Old Somara.[24] By 1910, there were thirty-six daughter colonies established as the immigrants eventually reached a total of eight thousand families.[25]

The Mennonite colonies in Russia were established under the conditions of the Russian Colonial Law. The ten articles of this Law offered a number of concessions including freedom of religion, freedom from military service, and local autonomy concerning property rights and inheritance regulations (see Appendix 1 for the complete list). It was the above-mentioned articles that were to be raised with other foreign governments when the need for migration arose in the future.

Under the limited autonomy offered by Russian Colonial Law, the colonies were left to manage their own secular and religious affairs. On the whole, the result was beneficial. The Mennonites

26°
30°
34°
38°
42°
46°
54°
50°
48°
44°
38°
POLAND
WHITE
RUSSIAN S.S.R.
RUSSIA S. F. R. S.
Dnieper River
UKRAINIAN S. S. R.
Chortitza
Borsenko
Molotschna
Bergthal
Fürstenland
ROMANIA
SEA OF AZOV
BLACK SEA
GEORGIAN S.S.R.
TURKEY
UKRAINIAN S.S.R.
MENNONITE SETTLEMENTS
(as of 1921)
MENNONITE SETTLEMENTS
100 0 100 200 MILES
100 0 100 200 KILOMETRES
SOURCE: MENNONITE ENCYCLOPEDIA Volume 3, page 754

Figure 3

strengthened their distinctive characteristics, and enjoyed cultural and material development as a result of their own industry and the favourable political atmosphere.[26] The relatively utopian situation in Russia was not to survive unchanged for long, for in a five-year period after 1873, eighteen thousand Mennonites, or about one-third of the total Russian Mennonite population, left their relatively new homes in South Russia.[27]

The cause of such a large scale mass migration cannot be explained by any one factor. As in most migrations, and especially with regard to the previous Mennonite migrations, the group movement was due to both "push" and "pull" factors. The worsening of conditions in Russia tended to push, while the pull was formed by attractive offers from other nations.

The push factors included a shortage of suitable agricultural land for the growing Mennonite population, relatively minor internal religious conflicts which had split the church and would continue to split it in years to come, and the rise of Russian nationalism in 1861, which insisted upon full participation in state affairs. The last factor was by far the most important because it aroused fears of compulsory military service and destruction of the desired social and physical isolation from the world.

The pull factors were essentially the availability of land and religious toleration offered by the countries in the Western Hemisphere. One must bear in mind that the Americas had offered refuge for Europe's masses for years and it was logical for the Russian Mennonites to consider the possibility of North America.

Ultimately the build-up of tension within the group could only

be relieved by emigration to a country willing to grant the concessions necessary to maintain the group isolation and identity. Thus the reaction to this type of problem, as we have seen in the Netherlands and in Prussia, was quickly becoming an institutionalized facet of the Mennonite way of life. Similarly in the future, any major threat to the principles of the faith would initiate thoughts of withdrawal and emigration.[28]

The Prussian experience was repeated again in the Russian steppes. The rising wave of Russian nationalism resulted in a clash with the prospering pacifist Mennonites. Restrictions were placed on the acquisition of land and Russian authorities were forced by the pro-nationalism groups to withdraw the military exemption clause in the Russian Colonial Law. Fortunately for the Russian Mennonites, as had been the case in Prussia, there was a way out. The New World countries of the United States and Canada were accepting immigrants. The latter of these countries was opening up new land in the western interior and was actively soliciting settlers for this land.[29]

Negotiations with the United States were not successful because of the reluctance on the part of the American officials to deal with groups of immigrants, or to openly seek immigrants abroad. The situation in Canada was very different. The Canadian government, faced with the vast expanse of the newly acquired Rupert's Land, and the threat of American expansion into the Canadian West, was urgently concerned with occupying these western lands. Thus the Canadian government was not prepared to permit the new province of Manitoba to handle such an important problem on its own, although

this was the policy with the older eastern provinces.

The negotiations were begun through the British authorities, with letters from John Lowe, Secretary in the Dominion Department of Agriculture, being forwarded to the Russian Mennonite leaders. Subsequently, William Hespeler, a German-born immigration agent and resident of Waterloo County, Ontario, was appointed to handle the question of Russian Mennonite emigration. Hespeler proceeded to Russia where he personally met the Mennonite leaders and distributed information about Canada, dealt with questions and doubts, and offered practical advice regarding emigration.[30]

In 1873, Russian Mennonite delegates visited both the United States and Canada to examine the potential locations for settlement. The delegates represented the Russian Mennonite subgroups or congregations of the Bergthal colony, the "Kleine Gemeinde" from the Borsenko colony, and the Furstenland settlement. Included in the group making the exploration tour were representatives of several other Anabaptist groups and one wealthy individual landowner.

The choice of representative delegates reflected a trend which would become evident after the mass migration from Canada to Mexico in the 1920's. The groups interested in migration, and thus most dissatisfied with the changing conditions in Russia, were splinter groups protesting against the "worldliness" of the majority of Russian Mennonites. Thus the groups formerly mentioned as the "Kleine Gemeinde" and Furstenland were favourably disposed to the proposed migration to Canada. Canada represented a new chance to establish their concept of Mennonitism in independent settlements.[31]

The group, later taking the name Bergthaler from their origin

in the Bergthal colony, had another motive in addition to those already mentioned. The Bergthal colony was begun between 1836 and 1852 by a group of landless families from the Chortitza colony. The colony grew to include five hundred families living in five villages. The settlement eventually proved economically unfeasible due to the unfavourable agricultural conditions.[32]

On the part of the Mennonite delegates from Russia, there was a general favourable impression of what Canada had to offer. At the conclusion of the land tours, the delegates received the following list of fifteen conditions regarding Mennonite emigration, in a letter from John Lowe, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.[33] The conditions were as follows:

"1. An entire exemption from military service is by law and Order-in-Council granted to the Denomination of Christians called Mennonites.
2. An Order-in-Council was passed on the 3rd March last to reserve eight townships in the Province of Manitoba for free grants on the conditions of settlement as provided in the Dominion Lands Act, that is to say, 'Any person who is head of a family or has obtained the age of 21 years shall be entitled to be entered for ¼ section or a less quantity of unappropriated Dominion lands, for a purpose of securing a homestead right in respect thereof.'
3. The said reserve of eight townships is for the exclusive use of the Mennonites, and the said free grants of ¼ section to consist of 160 acres each, as defined by the Act.
4. Should the Mennonite Settlement extend beyond the eight townships set aside by Order-in-Council of March 3rd last, other townships will be in the same way reserved to meet the full requirements of Mennonite immigration.
5. If next spring the Mennonite settlers on viewing the eight townships set aside for their use should decide to exchange them for any other unoccupied eight townships, such exchange will be allowed.

6. In addition to the free grant of ¼ section or 160 acres to every person over 21 years of age on the condition of settlement the rights to purchase the remaining 3/4 of the section at $1.00 per acre is granted by law so as to complete the whole section of 640 acres which is the largest quantity of land the Government will grant a patent for to one person.
7. The settler will receive a patent for a free grant after three years residence in accordance with the terms of the Dominion Lands Act.
8. In event of the death of the settler, the lawful heirs can claim the patent for the free grant upon proof that settlement duties for three years have been performed.
9. From the moment of occupation the settler acquires a "homestead right" in the land.
10. The fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles is by law afforded to the Mennonites without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever, and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools.
11. The privilege of affirming instead of making affidavits is afforded by law.
12. The Government of Canada will undertake to furnish passenger warrants from Hamburg to Fort Garry for Mennonite families of good characters for the sum of $30.00 for adult persons over the age of eight years, for persons under eight years half price or $15.00 and for infants under one year, $3.00.
13. The Minister specially authorizes me to state that this arrangement as to price shall not be changed for the seasons of 1874, 1875, or 1876.
14. I am further to state that if it is changed thereafter the price shall not up to the year 1882 exceed $40.00 per adult and children in proportion, subject to the approval of Parliament.
15. The immigrants will be provided with provisions on the portion of the journey between Liverpool and Collingwood but between other portions of the journey they are to find their own provisions.[34]

The Mennonites agreed to the above-mentioned conditions and began to prepare for the mass movement to Canada.

## SETTLEMENTS IN CANADA

The area chosen by the Mennonite advance delegation was within the newly opened lands of southern Manitoba. Two different tracts of land were reserved by the Dominion Government for settlement by Mennonites only. The first reserve was east of the Red River. It contained eight townships in its original state. This reserve was established and settled in 1873. The second reserve, the West Reserve, was established several years later in a location west of the first. It consisted of mostly prairie lands, unlike the treed and marshy East Reserve (see Figure 4).

For the most part, the land proved suitable for agriculture of the type carried on by the Mennonites in the Russian Steppes. To this group of Mennonites belongs the distinction of having been the first to demonstrate successfully that agriculture could be carried out on the treeless plains of the Canadian West.[35]

The success of their settlements in southern Manitoba was proof that a good quality agricultural life could be obtained on the open plain. Previous settlers had shunned the open prairie, preferring instead the woodlands and fertile river bottom lands. The trend was changing and was marked by these first Mennonite settlements.[36]

For the most part, the Mennonites established colonies in Manitoba in much the same way they had established daughter colonies in Russia. Under the Russian Colonial Law, they had established semi-autonomous nucleated agricultural villages with an associated open field or communal economy. The migration to Manitoba proved

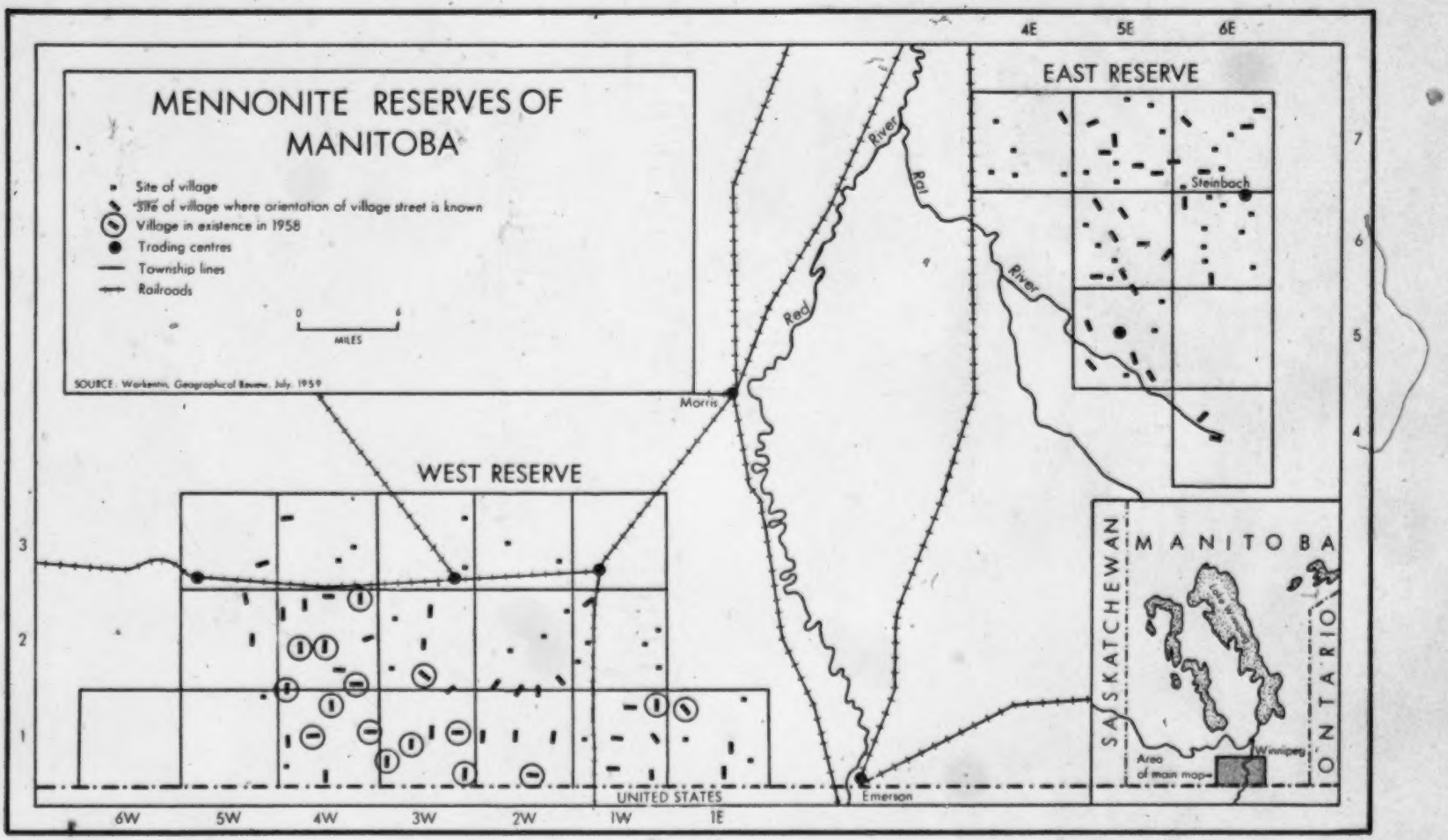

MENNONITE RESERVES OF MANITOBA
Site of village
Site of village where orientation of village street is known
Village in existence in 1958
Trading centres
Township lines
Railroads
0
6
MILES
SOURCE: Warkentin, Geographical Review, July, 1959
EAST RESERVE
WEST RESERVE
Steinbach
Morris
Emerson
Red River
Red River
UNITED STATES
4E
5E
6E
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
6W
5W
4W
3W
2W
1W
1E
SASKATCHEWAN
MANITOBA
ONTARIO
Winnipeg
Area of main map

Figure 4

to be a wholesale transfer of the same settlement pattern including the open field economy. In the initial subsistence or pioneering period, the open field system proved very successful, but encountered difficulty as the Mennonites began to adopt the commercial grain industry. This aspect of Mennonite development will be discussed in more detail later with reference to the survival of the total settlement pattern.

Less than twenty years after the establishment of the Manitoba colonies, the first out-migrations occurred. This migration began in 1893 and was directed to the formation of a colony south of Rosthern, Saskatchewan. This colony was supported by the Rheinland Mennonite Association of Manitoba. Various Mennonite factions participated in the movement to the Rosthern area. The general movement included a large group of Old Colonists from the West Reserve in Manitoba. These Old Colonists carried with them the strassendorf village system established in Manitoba. Thus the distinctive agricultural settlement pattern was transferred to the Hague-Osler area of Saskatchewan.[37]

In addition to the settlements in the Hague-Osler area of Saskatchewan, other land was acquired for the purpose of settling Mennonites from the Manitoba Reserves. The land purchased by Mennonites in Alberta and British Columbia was not settled in the strassendorf village pattern. The reason for establishment of the "old world" settlement only in Saskatchewan will be discussed in a later chapter. Although contiguous tracts of land were settled by groups of Mennonites, the method of settlement conformed strictly to the provisions of the Dominions Lands Act.

In 1904, the Rheinland Mennonite Association of Manitoba made application for land in southern Saskatchewan south of the town of Swift Current. The land in the amount of six townships was granted as a reserve to the Mennonites. This was to remain reserved solely for the purposes of Mennonite settlement until 1909, when what was not taken up by Mennonites was to be opened for general settlement.

Mennonite settlement on the Swift Current Reserve also took the form of the strassendorf villages characteristic of the Manitoba Reserves and of the Old Colony Hague-Osler settlement. It is these settlements that form the focus of this study.

In choosing Canada, the Mennonites did not find the ideal place in which to practice their religion and way of life. They were subject to renewed harassment with the onslaught of World War II when, as German ethnics, they were disfranchised. Furthermore, in the period following the War, the question of foreign language instruction in schools was raised, mainly in connection with the French/English dispute. This controversy engulfed the Mennonites and their system of education.

German was the language of instruction in the Old Colony Mennonite schools and was considered by the Mennonite clergy as essential to the preservation of the Mennonite culture. By denying the use of German, the Canadian government threatened the cultural survival of the Mennonites. This threat initiated, as in the past, thoughts of withdrawal and emigration. In this instance the country chosen was Mexico, where the authorities were willing to grant certain concessions acceptable to the Mennonites. As in their other

migrations, it was the conservative elements that left Canada for Mexico. These conservative elements were the people most affected by the changing conditions which threatened the Mennonite way of life.

Subsequent migrations and movements have taken Mennonites to nearly all the countries of the Americas. In general, Mennonite migrations and colonization attempts have met with varying degrees of success, relative to the standard of living of the host country.

Finally, there has been a high frequency of migrations among the Mennonites. The movements have been of both internal and international natures. The movement to the settlements to be discussed was of an internal nature, similar to the movements resulting in daughter colonies in the Russian Ukraine. In the case of this study, the settlements to be examined are daughter colonies of the previously established Manitoba colonies and will therefore be examined in that light.

## CONCLUSIONS

Earlier, the early sixteenth century religious origins of the group of Low Country Dutch people that eventually became Mennonites were discussed. In addition, the discussion broadened to include a brief survey of the migrations of the group and their spread throughout the Western World.

Soon after the advent of Mennonitism, many members of the religious group took up residence in the Vistula Delta of Poland (later Prussia). The nature of the physical environment and the farming methods required favoured the formation of isolated co-operative group settlements. Within the settlements, social

and economic activities were confined largely to group members. These settlements were initially allowed a certain amount of local autonomy under their own elected local officials, and this tended to isolate the Mennonite community from the larger society.

Given the above situation, it was natural that a separation began to occur between the Mennonite colonies and the larger society. This differentiation was further strenghtened by the Mennonite religion and their Germanic language which set them apart from their Polish neighbours.

After the Polish or West Prussian Vistula Delta area became unsuitable for the survival of the Mennonite way of life, the Mennonites were forced to migrate into yet another cultural area. In the Russian Ukraine they settled in the sparsely populated steppes. Under the Russian Colonial Law they were encouraged to enjoy local autonomy within their village communes.[38] This fact blocked possibilities of assimilation into the larger society.

The village administration owned the land within designated confines and exercised a large measure of social and economic control over all of the village inhabitants. In addition, the open field system, introduced into the Mennonite settlements shortly after the first migration from Prussia, combined with the closed village habitat, tended to lend solidarity, through co-operation, to the group, eventually developing into a "well-integrated social organism".[39] Further developing their isolation, the Mennonites adopted a system of elected lay preachers for their churches, and this effectively stifled higher learning, worldliness, worldly ambitions, or conspicuous behavious, which was not condusive to the

development of strong individual leaders.[40]

The Russians advocated the social, economic, and religious separation of the Mennonites. In the initial stages of settlement the Russian institutional framework, especially the government and the economy, aided the establishment of the Mennonites, but very quickly, they were expected to organize themselves into a self-sufficient, self-regulating system of colonies. The Russian authorities considered the German-speaking Mennonites as foreigners and heretics. Thus it was expedient that they be sealed off from the rest of the Russian population.[41]

Finally, the social system thus developed allowed only a minimum of outside contact. Mennonite prosperity was made dependent on the wide use of the natural resources within the limits of the colony. The whole system was sanctioned by the Russian authorities and by the late nineteenth century, the Mennonites had become a distinctive people with well-developed institutions to deal with religion, education, and civil order.

Today the term "Mennonite" means more than an affiliation with a particular fundamentalist Protestant sect. The word Mennonite includes a wide range of degrees of conservatism. On one end of the scale are the modern evangelical Mennonite churches which are surficially indistinguishable from other Protestant church groups. On the other hand, the scale is balanced by the most conservative group represented by the "Altkolonier" (Old Colony) and the Amish Mennonites. This latter group, especially the Amish Mennonites, are characterized by a strict adherence to a very conservative way of life, which includes the maintenance of austere dress codes and

and the refusal to use any of the modern conveniences, including the use of modern agricultural equipment. In these more conservative groups, being a Mennonite has become more than a religion; it is a total way of life. Thus, in definition, the conservative groups have become ethnic groups with their own culture, language, and religion.

Migration to Canada had effects on the social development of the Mennonite people. New schisms appeared in the existing groups when the "old world" peasant economy encountered the concept of commercial agriculture in the Canadian west. As shall be discussed later, these factors had a direct bearing on the nature and survival of the Old Colony Mennonite settlements in Saskatchewan.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FOOTNOTES

[1]The term strassendorf refers to the village pattern which consists of one street with the individual lots on either side of this street. The lots vary in size according to the area of settlement, but usually contained all farm facilities including the connected house-and-barn, livestock facilities, machinery storage, as well as household garden plots.

[2]John Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlement of Southern Manitoba," Geographical Review, XLIX, 3 (1959).

[3]John C. Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine, (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1947), p. 18.

[4]C. Henry Smith, The Story of the Mennonites, (Newton, Kansas: Mennonite Publication Office, 1957), p. 8.

[5]Ibid., p. 13.

[6]Ibid., p. 16.

[7]Ibid., p. 18.

[8]E. K. Francis, In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites of Manitoba, (Altona, Manitoba: D. W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., 1955), p. 12.

"Eventually even Anabaptist congregations having no direct connection with Menno's (Simon) movement became known as Mennonites, a generic term used today synonomous with Evangelical Anabaptists."

The term as used here refers to the descendents of the Dutch Anabaptists (Mennonites) who fled successively to Prussia, Russia, and then to North America.

[9]Ferdinand P. Schultz, A History of the Settlement of German Mennonites from Russia at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, (Minneapolis: Fletcher Press, 1938), p. 16.

[10]Wenger, op. cit., pp. 214 - 228.

[11]Francis, op. cit., p. 12.

[12]Schultz, op. cit., p. 12.

[13]The Mennonites moved into the Danzig area, onto the delta of the Vistula and Nogat Rivers. The area was marshy land well below sea level. The dykes built by the Teutonic Knights during reclamation in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries were largely ruined and the land was again flooded. Dutch entrepreneurs offered restoration by inviting Mennonites from the Netherlands, who were skilled dyke builders, to settle in the area. More Mennonites followed, as persecution in the Netherlands increased and as the reputation of the Mennonites as reclamation experts grew and spread.

The Vistula-Nogat delta came under control of the Kingdom of Prussia after the first partition of Poland in 1772. This change in government and the lack of tolerance associated with it eventually led to the migration of Mennonites to Russia from the Vistula-Nogat delta after nearly one hundred years of settlement.

[14]H. Penner, "West Prussian Mennonites Through Four Centuries," Mennonite Quarterly Review, XXIII (1949), p. 232.

[15]Ibid., p. 237.

[16]Schultz, op. cit., p. 15.

[17]Penner, op. cit., p. 238.

[18]Ibid., p. 239.

[19]Schultz, op. cit., p. 8.

[20]E. K. Francis, "The Russian Mennonites: From Religious Group to Ethnic Group," American Journal of Sociology, LIV (1950), p. 18.

[21]C. H. Smith, The Mennonites: A Brief History of their Origin, (Brene, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1920), p. 148.

[22]Penner, op. cit., p. 243.

[23]Ibid., p. 147.

[24]J. Winfield Fretz, Mennonite Colonization, (Akron, Penn.: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1944), p. 7.

[25]Francis, "Religious Group to Ethnic Group," p. 19.

[26]William Friesen, "A Mennonite Community in the East Reserve: Its Origin and Growth," Historical Essays on the Prairie Provinces, ed. Donald Swainson, (Toronto: McClelland Stewart Ltd., 1970), p. 101.

[27]Smith, The Mennonites, p. 447.

[28]Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 31.

[29]Ibid., p. 43.

[30]Ibid., p. 38.

[31]Ibid., p. 37.

[32]Ibid., p. 39.

[33]Ibid., pp. 42 - 45.

[34]Ibid., pp. 44, 45.

[35]R. W. Murchie, Agricultural Progress on the Prairie Frontier, Vol. V, Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, (Toronto: The MacMillan Co., 1934), p. 7.

[36]W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg, Prairie Settlement: The Geographical Setting, Vol. 1, Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, (Toronto: The MacMillan Co., 1934), p. 59.

[37]Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 64.

[38]Ibid., p. 19.

[39]Ibid., p. 22.

[40]Ibid., p. 22.

[41]Ibid., p. 24.

## CHAPTER THREE

## SETTLEMENT IN MANITOBA

### INTRODUCTION

The Manitoba Mennonites originated from a larger group of dissatisfied coreligionists leaving Russia for North America. They left in the face of increasing pressure of "Russification", which threatened to destroy the Mennonite institutions. In order to preserve these institutions, a group of eighteen thousand Mennonites from various settlements in the Russian Ukraine decided to migrate to North America after 1873. Approximately eight thousand of this larger group chose a southern Manitoba location as opposed to the various United States alternatives.

Early in 1873, there were mutual overtures made by the Canadian government and by Mennonite representatives, and an exchange of information took place. A movement of this nature was seen as mutually beneficial for two of the parties concerned, while the Russian government objected, but allowed the migration.

The Canadian government was desirous of settling the West in order to thwart any possible invasion of Americans across the forty-ninth parallel into the newly acquired Rupert's Land. In addition, to ensure the economic viability of the transcontinental railroad

link between British Columbia and the rest of Canada, it was imperative that the Plains between be settled by agricultural people. Finally, in wider national perspective, large scale immigration was necessary to develop the agricultural hinterland, which in turn was essential to the industrial development of Central Canada. The Mennonites were desirous of leaving Russia and were ready to accept a host country that would provide the social environment that the Russian government was in the process of destroying.[1]

Shortly after the initial contact and exchange of information, a twelve-man delegation of Mennonites from various colonies in Russia visited the land available in both the United States and Canada. The Canadian land was located in the area of what later became the East Reserve. The land examined in Manitoba was found to be marshy in areas and excessively dry and subject to drought in others. The climate and the native population were considered by some as other negative aspects of the land in Manitoba. This is evidenced by the following excerpts from the diaries of delegation members:

> "At some places the land is good, but railroad facilities are poor...The lumber for building purposes must be shipped by way of the Red River from Minnesota...Grasshoppers are plentiful. The price of stock and agricultural implements is more reasonable in the United States than in Manitoba, and if the same is shipped across the boundary a duty must be paid on it."[2]

Furthermore, another delegation member appeared to favour a re-examination of United States land as another more suitable possibility:

> "...five of the deputation determined to accompany me to Dakota, as we were fully satisfied with our experience there. Manitoba has a good soil - and good water at some places, but it has not much facilities for transportation to or from - and the inhabitants are nearly

> all half-breeds, Indians, a poor, shiftless race of people, and I can not recommend it as a good place for settlement."[3]

According to the above, it would then seem that Manitoba initially proved to be quite undesirable as a potential home for the Mennonites. The question then arises as to why more than one-third of the eighteen thousand Mennonites leaving Russia decided to settle in Manitoba. It appears that the question of land quality was not of primary concern to at least one segment of this larger group. This portion of the larger group viewed the question of "freedom of conscience" to be uppermost. The eight thousand Mennonites who chose Canada felt that the exemption from military service could be more easily obtained in Canada than it could in the United States.

The reason for this opinion was formed during the visit to the United States by delegation members. While there, contact was made with the Hutterian Brethern, a similar Anabaptist group. Military service exemption had been denied them as had the request for control over the administration of their own schools. These issues were of major importance to the conservative members of the Mennonite congregations. Thus, the experience of the Hutterian Brethern in the United States undoubtedly played a role in diverting a considerable number of emigrating Russian Mennonites to Canada.[4]

In addition to the above, land in Canada, although of a lower quality, could be obtained at prices much lower than available land in the United States. Land granted under the Dominion Lands Act in 1873 was free for the first 160 acres. Additional land in the amount of 480 acres per person could be purchased for $1.00 an acre. In the United States, land was available at $3.00 an acre, and there was

no free grant.[5]

As a direct result of the above circumstances the more conservative element and the poorer element of the migrating Mennonite group chose Manitoba over and above the United States.[6]

According to conditions laid down by the federal government in a letter from the Department of Agriculture to the Mennonite representatives (see Appendix 3), the Mennonite migrants were to be given special rights to a tract of land consisting of eight townships known as the East Reserve. It was located about thirty miles southeast of Winnipeg, Manitoba (see Figure 4). The most important of these special rights included the exclusive right to homestead the land within the reserved areas, thereby providing insurance against the intrusion by non-Mennonite elements into the settlement area.

The Mennonites were to homestead the land under the conditions of the Dominion Lands Act, amended later in 1876 to allow the Mennonites the opportunity of re-establishing the settlement form to which they had become accustomed in the Russian Ukraine.

By special Orders-in-Council, land totalling nine hundred square miles was reserved for settlement exclusively by Mennonites. In 1873, the East Reserve, totalling eight townships or 288 square miles, was chosen. The Mennonites began arriving and occupying the land in 1874. The quality of the land in this initial settlement area had never satisfied the Mennonites and was not of sufficient quantity to accommodate all of the forty thousand Mennonites expected to migrate to Canada. This was an optimistic figure as only eighteen thousand Mennonites left Russia during this period, and only eight thousand settled in Canada. Nonetheless, the land set aside was not enough

to accommodate those Mennonites that did come. The delegates asked, therefore, that they be allowed the right to select, at a later date, a parcel of land subject to the same conditions as the original grant.

Shortly after the initial settlement in the East Reserve, another Order-in-Council was issued, and according to the above-mentioned agreement, reserved a larger tract of land south of the original grant and west of the Red River. In 1875, the incoming Mennonites, as well as some from the East Reserve, began to settle the seventeen townships or 612 square miles of what was referred to as the West Reserve.

The process of occupying the land was unusual but simple. A group of would-be settlers, generally relatives, friends, or members of the same congregation, banded together, pooling their individually-deeded homestead quarter-sections in order that the semi-communal village pattern could be established. The villagers all agreed to a number of conditions, including not to sell their land to anyone of whom the village population as a whole had not approved. The co-operative association was voluntary, with each member agreeing to abide with the by-laws of the resultant village in order that all might benefit equally from the quality and quantity of land available to the village.[7]

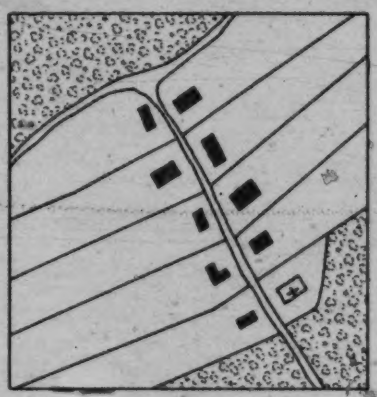
The group of villagers, usually eight to thirty families, chose its individual homestead quarter-sections with respect to what the group decided was needed by way of arable land, woodland, pasture, water and other natural resources. The village site was chosen to be central within the available land, generally an intentionally contiguous block, which was apportioned into individual village lots

or farm yards, fields and pastures. In this way, the village land was divided so that each farmer received an equitable share of suitable land. Thus the Manitoba Mennonites were able to establish a unique settlement pattern, which has survived in part to the present day.

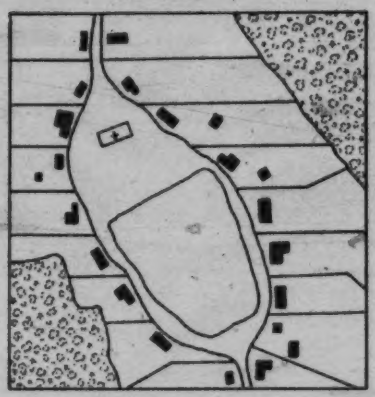
Through the series of migrations, which characterized the Mennonite people from their origin in the Netherlands, they developed from a religious group into an ethnic group with cultural trappings peculiar to themselves. The origin of the linear settlement form characteristic of the Old Colony Mennonites in Saskatchewan today is the subject of discussion in the following section of the study.

The agricultural village settlement pattern used by the Mennonites is not unique, in Canada, to them. The linear village form bears some similarity to the linear settlements that the French established in Canada as early as the sixteenth century. The French pattern, as does the Mennonite pattern, finds its roots in the antecedent European patterns.[8] In addition, it bears resemblance to the village pattern established by the Doukhobors around the turn of the nineteenth century. This latter pattern is today only barely discernible in the areas of Saskatchewan in which it was established.

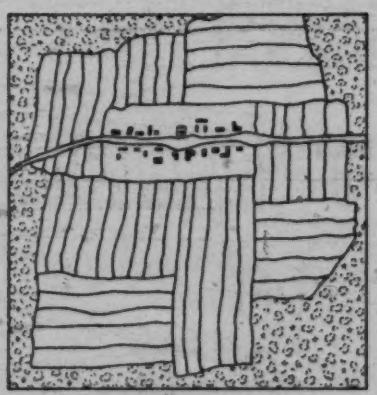
In the Marschhufendorf type of settlement form, buildings are located along the village road or along a river.[9] The agricultural land lies around the village, and is divided into long narrow strips lying at right angles to the village orientation. The land use intensity characteristically decreases with distance from the farmstead, with woodlots and common land at the greatest distance from the house (see first strassendorf plan, Figure 5).



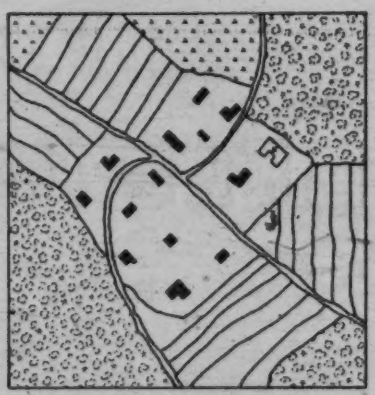
STRASSENDORF ( similar to the "Marschhufen - dorf" or the "Waldhufendorf" )



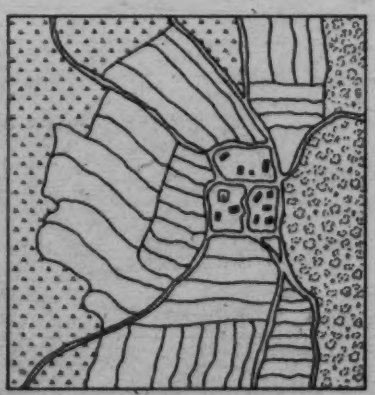
ANGERDORF ( long village grouped around an elongated square )



STRASSENDORF ( a mixture of the mixture of the Slavic line village and the German "Gewann - dorf" )



HAUFENDORF ("village in a heap")



GEWANNDORF ( compact village group with associated open field system )

## GROUND PLANS OF VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS

- Buildings
- Church
- Woodland
- Common Pasture
- Roads and Streets
- Field Boundaries

Scale of plans varies

Source: Orwin, C. S. and and Orwin, C. S. The Open Fields, 2nd Edn 1954, page 304

Figure 5

The similarity between the above and the Mennonite agricultural village is limited to the basic form. In the Mennonite village, houses were located on one or both sides of a road, and in Manitoba, along both a river and a road with the river at the rear and houses on only one side of the road, with the spacing of houses dependent on the village lot size.

Unlike the form mentioned previously, the Mennonite village lot or farm yard comprised only enough area to build the house and outbuildings, pasture a few cattle, and enough arable land for garden use. The rest of the individual farmer's share of land was located outside the village proper and was arranged in the open field system as discussed earlier.

The arrangement of village and open field system was adopted widely in Europe during the tenth century.[10] The open field system was generally associated with the Haufendorf and Angerdorf village forms rather than the line or street village or Marschhufendorf form characteristic of the Mennonite village form.[11] The Mennonites seem to have adopted a peculiar pattern of line village and open field system.[12] How and why the Mennonites adopted this arrangement can be answered in their historical experience.

The Mennonites were invited into Prussia in groups by various Prussian land owners. They were to open up the more undesirable and underpopulated areas of Prussia as part of the general program of economic and social improvement carried out by the European monarchs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Mennonites have been credited with making much of the formerly useless swamp land into valuable arable land.

In Prussia, the Mennonites organized themselves initially into long narrow line settlements fashioned after the Marschhufendorf, which was a common form of settlement in Northern Europe at the time. The houses forming a village were placed in a long row, usually along the bank of a river, with the distance between the houses greater than the distance later found between houses in the Manitoba villages. Mennonites coming into Prussia at later dates established the Angerdorf as the settlement form where the buildings were arranged casually around a central elongated square (see Figure 5). The land controlled by the Mennonite villages was not operated according to the communal open field system even though the practice was common in surrounding Prussia from the Middle Ages onward.[13]

The land was owned and operated by the individual agricultural villagers, while the community organization was copied from that which the Mennonites were familiar with in the Netherlands. The villages of Holland from which the Mennonites came, and those in Prussia which they established, required a high degree of co-operation in order to maintain the elaborate system of dykes and drainage ditches. The villages were administered by elected officials, the head of whom was the "Schulze". There is no evidence that the Mennonite church controlled the civil government as it later did in Russia.

The population of the various Prussian settlements was not necessarily solely Mennonite, but was interspersed with other Dutch people of various religious affiliations. However, there is evidence that the "Waisenanat" (orphan welfare) and a fire insurance

scheme, later closely connected with the Mennonite church and Mennonite communities, did originate with the Mennonites from the co-operative villages of Prussia.[14]

Removal of the Mennonites to Russia followed Catherine II's general invitation to all Europeans, excepting Jews. She provided for free land to be settled by groups, preferrably of similar ethnic, national, or religious affiliation. The free land for the groups was termed the "volost", which was a "collective and indivisable property" belonging to a particular foreign colony.[15]

In the case of the Mennonite settlements, the "volost" was apportioned into 175-acre plots which became the heritable property of individual families. The land not needed for homesteads at the time of initial settlement was used as village common land. This was used for common pasture, woodland or lease land, the income from which went to the village treasury.

The village operated under an agreement binding village members to a number of provisions. The provisions were enforced by the local Mennonite government which was closely allied with the church. Failure to abide by the colony by-laws could result in excommunication from the church, expulsion from the colony, and loss of the special rights and privileges enjoyed by the colony under the Russian Colonial Law.

Land was owned by the family in permanent usufruct unless the family should die out, whereupon the land reverted to the village. This land was not to be sold, mortgaged, or partitioned, thus it always remained within the domain of the government of the colony. In this way the Russian Imperial government kept the Mennonites and

other ethnic groups segregated and the Mennonites managed to achieve protection from intrusion by "outsiders".[16]

There were two factors influencing the change in settlement pattern. First, the Russian authorities themselves, in the development of the Code of 1842, through the various Russian Colonial Laws of the early nineteenth century, instigated change. Second, the newly acquired nomadic neighbours led to changes in the settlement pattern established by the new colonies.

The Russian authorities instigated the redivision of the "volost" into large open fields with each field divided into long narrow strips farmed individually by the Mennonite farmers. This was a one-time redivision to improve the quality of agriculture within the Mennonite settlements. The redistribution of land resulted in a change from the former method of landholding.[17]

The constant attacks by their nomadic neighbours led the Mennonites to consolidate their villages rather than to maintain the long drawn out Marschhufendorf. The resultant settlement form was a linear village with buildings relatively close together and along one or both sides of a central street. This village pattern came to be associated with the open field system of agriculture.[18]

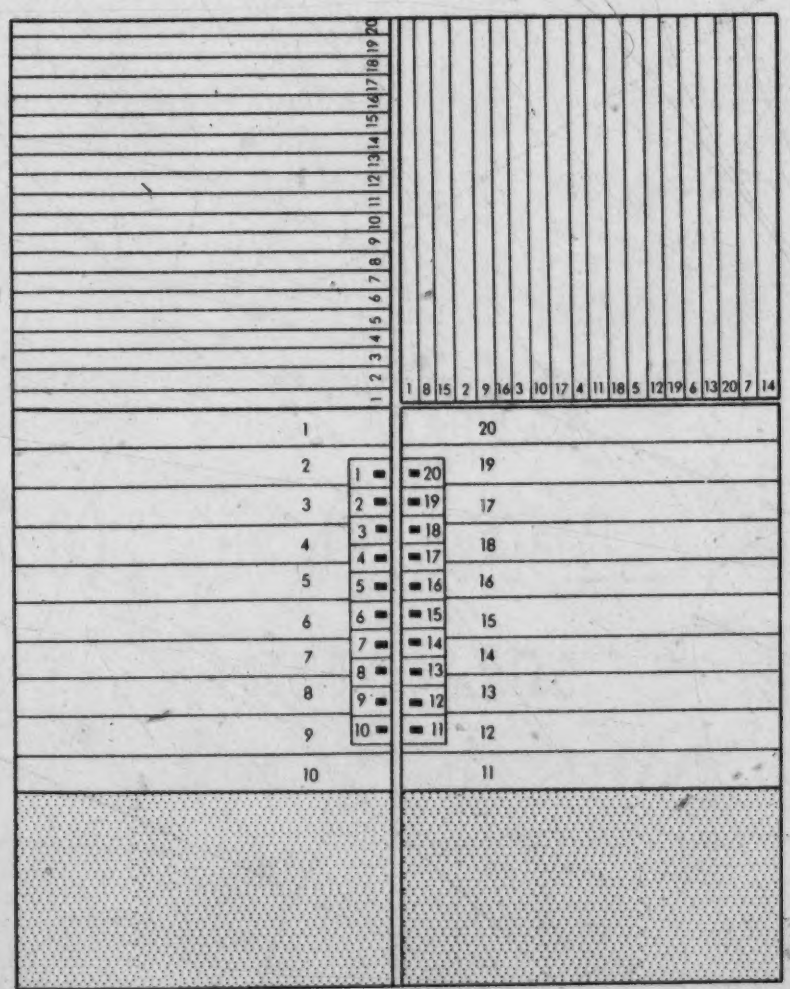
The Mennonites adapted their settlement form to accommodate the Russian influence while maintaining the general linear form which originated in the Marschhufendorf in Holland and Prussia. Thus, the settlement pattern which was carried to Manitoba was a result of the past Prussian experience and the more immediate Russian influence.

## MANITOBA SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND VILLAGE MORPHOLOGY

Each farmer was eligible to receive 160 acres of free homestead land from the federal government. A group of Mennonite farmers, usually relatives, friends in Russia, or even just members of the same congregation, would pool their homestead land after agreeing to a number of provisions. One such agreement has been preserved.[19]

This agreement refers to the willingness of the participants to establish village communities like those they had established in Russia with the associated communal land use system. The arrangement also outlines the duties of each villager with regard to taxes and schools. Each villager also voluntarily agreed not to sell his land to a person not approved of by the rest of the village population.[20] This last point was designed to maintain the group insularity in the village system.

The recreation of the Russian village environment is given in a hypothetical example taken from Warkentin's study of Mennonite settlements in Manitoba (see Figure 6). The example given in Figure 6 supposes that the average village will be composed of twenty families. The head of each family will receive a quarter-section of land from the federal government. The available land for the village then totals five sections or five square miles of land. Ideally, the land would be chosen in such a way as to form one contiguous block as in Figure 6. The village site was then located centrally to the village land and division into fields and pastures could begin. The village land or "flur" was divided into large fields or "gewanne". These "gewanne" were further divided into long narrow strips of individually farmed fields termed "kagel".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20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11
IDEALIZED MENNONITE VILLAGE
OF TWENTY MEMBERS
Village lots and residences
Field strips (Kagle)
Common pasture
0 ½ 1 MILES
0 1 KILOMETERS
Compiled from J. Warkentin, Mennonite Agricultural Settlements of Southern Manitoba, Geographical Review, Vol. 49, 3 (1959) p. 344.

Figure 6

The non-arable land was used for common pasture in which each villager enjoyed communal rights. Furthermore, each farmer received a village lot upon which he constructed his home, barn, and out-buildings.[21]

Thus the village settlement pattern of the Russian settlements was recreated with only a few minor differences. The pattern was much more regular in the Manitoba settlements due to the practice of using the rectangular survey lines as guides to the measurement and division of the various land parcels.[22]

This system of village establishment was used from the earliest days of settlement in all the villages in both the East and West Reserves. Legal foundation, however, was not given to this practice until 1876 when the Dominion Lands Act was amended to provide for deviation from the regular residence requirement of the Dominion Lands Act of 1872.[23]

The system used by the Mennonites had certain advantages over the system proposed by the Dominion Lands Act. Under the latter, the would-be settler chose his quarter-section homestead in such a way as to provide for the necessary arable land, pasture land, woodland, and water supply. On the other hand, under the former system, the would-be villagers were in effect able to benefit from a much larger area of land which in fact increased in area in relationship to the population of the village. The resultant greater amount of land could theoretically provide a greater resource base and thus a more equitable and desirable arrangement of land use.[24]

The system worked well in the West Reserve where the land was of a much more uniform quality than was the case in the East

Reserve where the land was of generally more variable nature. The East Reserve was poorly drained, more heavily wooded, and contained many old raised beach ridges. Villages in the East Reserve were often forced to include land within the "flur" that they would not have chosen otherwise, in order to make the "flur" a contiguous block. The village of Blumenort in the East Reserve is an excellent example of this situation. Only a small portion of the Blumenort "flur" was actually used for arable agriculture while the rest remained unused bushland.[25]

This type of situation was quite common and in some cases resulted in villages without enough arable land to allow each of its members to derive an adequate living from his share of village land.[26] It was this fact, among others, that led to modification in land use and the demise of some villages.

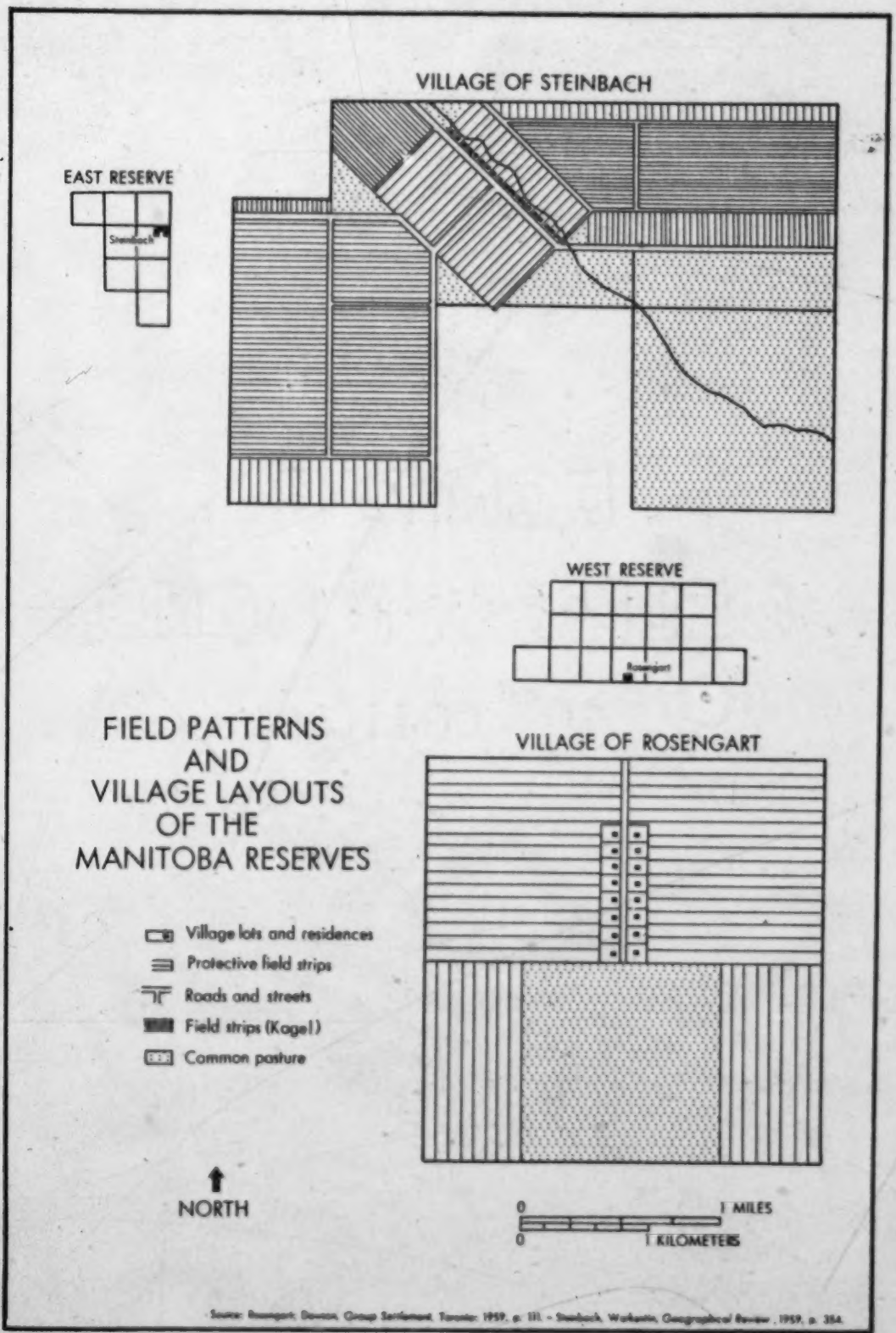
All of the more than one hundred Mennonite villages were located in such a way as to give members ease of access to all their farmland in the "flur". Although the Mennonites in both reserves settled in the village pattern, there was a basic difference in village orientation and layout in the East Reserve as opposed to the West Reserve (see Figure 7).

The land area of the East Reserve was crossed by many creeks and the importance of a surface water supply influenced the location of many of the villages along these creeks. Generally, the village lots were on the order of 200 feet wide and 500 feet or more in length. The lot fronted on the village street, extending in length to the creek. The houses were located on the street end of the lot and on only one side of that street. The land area behind the house

was generally used for the outbuildings, garden, equipment storage, and a small private pasture. Although other villages were located on raised beach ridges and some were without orientation to any natural feature, the layout of the village remained the same. In all but two cases, the villages of the East Reserve had houses located on only one side of the street (see Figure 7).[27]

In the West Reserve, houses were located on both sides of the street with only one exception. The choice of village site was less restricted due to the better drainage of the West Reserve and the overall better quality of the land. The orientation to direction of surface drainage was not as prominent in the West Reserve. Obvious attempts were made to minimize its limiting effect by placing the village street at right angles to the creek, giving many of the villages a north-south orientation due to the prevailing east-west drainage pattern. This not only allowed for a more equitable access to the surface water supply from both sides of the street, but also facilitated a more equitable distribution of farmland. The width of the individual lots was the same in both reserves, while the length was generally longer, in some cases as much as one-half mile. There was no consistency in lot length in the West Reserve as it varied with the individual villages.[28]

The village street was ungraded, varying in width from 100 to 120 feet with a small drainage ditch on either side. The villages varied in length according to the number of farmers comprising the village population. The length of village seldom exceeded one-half mile and little difference existed between the two reserves, even though the arrangement of houses did differ.[29]




Source: Rosengart: Dawson, Group Settlement, Toronto: 1959, p. 111. - Steinbach, Warkentin, Geographical Review, 1959, p. 384.

Figure 7

The basic strassendorf plan of the villages was maintained in all except two cases, one in each of the Reserves. The deviation consisted of a simple cross street. In the East Reserve, the growth of some villages filled lots on the vacant side of the street. Eventually many of the East Reserve villages took on the appearance of the West Reserve villages. In addition, the vacant lots of the East Reserve villages were used to establish services, such as the flour mill or store. In the villages of the West Reserve, these improvements had to be built on one of the individual lots already occupied by a farmer's buildings. Thus, growth was more easily facilitated in the East Reserve village plan.[30]

BREAKDOWN AND MODIFICATION OF THE VILLAGE SYSTEM

In Russia, the Mennonites, as well as other German groups, were given local autonomy over schools, road maintenance, social welfare measures, and also the appointment or election of local officials. In actual effect, the Mennonite Colonies in Russia were completely autonomous bodies within the larger Russian state. The only official contact with the Russian government was through a special commission for foreign colonies. This is the administrative background which ideally would be transferred to the Manitoba colonies.[31]

The administration of the Manitoba villages as copied from Russia was headed by the "Schultze" or mayor, who was elected by the "Wirte" or landowners. Other elected officials included the "Hirtenschultze", who looked after the administration of the village pasture and the "Brandschultze" who performed the duties of the fire marshall. The "Schultze" called meetings of the "Schultzenbott" or

village assembly, made up of the landowning members of the village. All major discussions regarding the administration of the open field system, building and maintenance of the village infrastructure, fire protection, and the operation of the school and church were carried out by this group. The elected officials were generally closely associated with the church administration and the authority of the church lent strength to their decisions.[32]

The Mennonites maintained this type of local government despite the introduction of a different system of local government by the newly established provincial authorities. Development of the municipal system of local government once established did replace the Mennonite form of local government and aided in the disruption of the village system.

In the East Reserve, the larger Bergthal group welcomed the change to the municipal system as a means whereby this relatively progressively minded group could free themselves from the dominance of the conservative Furstenland faction. The Bergthal group considered the social organization which had been transferred from Russia as obstructive to their economic advancement.[33]

The Bergthal group had previously begun the deviation from the accepted form of village habitat by moving out of the village onto their own homesteads as early as the beginning of the 1870's. The Furstenland people, although they disagreed with the municipal system, were persuaded to adopt the "western way". This avoided unnecessary friction. The persuasion was partially accompl shed by the appointment of the Furstenland "Oberschultze" as the first reeve, which in effect insured that the actual functioning of the local government

would not change.[34]

The changeover in the West Reserve to the municipal method of local government did not occur as easily as it had in the East Reserve. The disagreement between the Furstenland group and the Bergthal group, accompanied by a timely redrawing of the municipal boundaries, resulted in the development of a unique situation. The West Reserve was divided into the Municipalities of Douglas and Rhineland. The whole of the Bergthal group was contained within the boundaries of the Municipality of Douglas, while the Furstenland group was contained in the Municipality of Rhineland.[35] The Bergthal group found no difficulty in converting to the municipal system with an elected reeve. The Furstenland group, on the other hand, found the municipal administration system unacceptable, especially since the appointed reeve was an Anglo-Saxon. The Furstenland group refused to take part in the operation of the municipal system, continuing instead with their own system on an unofficial basis. This situation of a "state within a state" was continued until after the mass exodus in the 1920's.

The lack of co-operation by the Furstenland group led to a rather inefficient administration of the Municipality of Rhineland, which eventually led to its absorption by the Municipality of Douglas. The Furstenland people maintained their unofficial administration of their own affairs. The dual administration did not seem to hinder the functioning of the larger municipality.[36] The net result of the change of local governmental form was a weakening of the traditional church control and thereby a disruption of the traditional settlement system.

In order to determine whether or not the eventual breakdown of the system was in net balance a loss or a gain, one must consider the advantages and disadvantages of the open field economy and the Mennonites' self-imposed insularity.

The advantages of the system are many. As the system operated on a co-operative basis, it necessitated an automatic type of charity to the less fortunate members of the village. The economic and psychological well-being of the group demanded that all members be relatively successful agriculturally and those who were not were given assistance. The close habitat induced by the village settlement form did away with many of the hardships endured by prairie settlers on their own isolated farmsteads. Aid in time of emergency or for major projects was readily available in the village. This system of settlement also allowed for learning via observation of a neighbour's success or failure. Practical demonstration of new methods was easily facilitated by the close proximity of one's neighbours. Of similar concern was the conquest of common problems, such as weed and pest control, by co-operative action. Finally, the equitable distribution of available land and the sharing of a common village infrastructure had obvious economic benefits.[37]

The disadvantages, like the advantages, are many. One of the disadvantages of the system arose out of the need for co-operation. In many cases, even a relatively minor lack of co-operation led to deterioration of a whole commune. The obvious case is illustrated by the withdrawal of one member of the community. As each member held the legal deed to his own homestead, this meant a withdrawal of a small portion of village land. If the withdrawn land was

essential to the operation of the whole, despite its relative size, the village open field system was abandoned.

The necessity of having complete community support and approval for the introduction of innovative methods often meant that the villages tended to stagnate with few technical advances. The long narrow "kagel" were not well suited to the adoption of the large agricultural machinery slowly being introduced.[38] These last criticisms weigh heavily in light of the modern development in the extensive commercial grain industry characteristic of the Canadian West.

Warkentin relies heavily on the economic arguments in his presentation of the abandonment of the village system. The Mennonites were from the beginning eager to own and farm their own homesteads which often represented an unimaginable wealth of land. The hardships of pioneer life and the strength of the church with its threat of excommunication often overrode this desire in the initial period of settlement. The Mennonite leaders realized from the beginning that in order to maintain the village system of settlement and its social organization, the "worldly" influence would have to be kept out. The superimposition of transportation systems (the railway) and trade centers soon destroyed the insularity of the Mennonite settlements.[39]

In addition to the above trends, the Mennonites of both reserves faced different disruptive forces leading to the same abandonment of the established system. In the East Reserve, the variability of land quality provided a disruptive force. The land was deeded legally to individual farmers. Naturally enough, a farmer with a

particularily good quarter-section of land would be tempted, and given the right conditions, would insist on secession from the sharing arrangement. The result has been discussed before.

In the West Reserve, after the 1860's, many villagers expanded into large scale wheat production. This necessitated the mortgaging of land in order to secure the necessary machinery. Many farmers were then unable to meet their financial commitments. The result was foreclosure and a loss of village land. Other factors, such as the desire to move and sell one's land or to expand one's holdings, often resulted in similar disruptions.[40]

Francis attributes the disadvantages mentioned earlier and the economic factors leading to the breakup, to the status of "convenient rationalization" for a breakdown occurring due to sociological and psychological factors.[41] Nevertheless, whatever the cause of the withdrawal of individuals or groups from the established system, it resulted in disruption and breakdown. The system was held together by a very weak cementing agent, namely the voluntary agreement mentioned earlier. The village agreement did not have a basis in the laws of Canada and therefore recourse was limited.

The Bergthal group, characteristically more progressively minded, were the first to leave the village system, as early as 1883. The Kleine Gemeinde and Firstenland groups were able, with the threat of excommunication and influential leaders, to maintain the system as late as 1926.[42] The conservative elements managed to maintain some of the agricultural villages by purchasing the individual lots from the dissenting member but the open field system was unable to survive the destructive forces.[43]

There were more than 120 villages established in the Manitoba reserves at various times. In the East Reserve, there were only forty-five villages in existence at any one time. More than three-quarters had fewer than ten families in 1891. In the West Reserve, seventy villages were established with only fifty in existence in 1891. The average population of the West Reserve villages was about twenty families, considerably larger than those of the East Reserve.[44]

By 1930, there were no longer any open fields associated with the Mennonite villages.[45] By 1946, only twenty-four villages remained, four in the East Reserve and twenty in the West Reserve. The basic strassendorf plan was recognizeable but the village bore little functional similarity to the original.[46] By 1958, only seventeen of the West Reserve villages survived, while not one survived in the East Reserve.[47]

The trend of abandonment is obvious from the very earliest days of settlement. The reasons for this abandonment are numerous. Those that have been given most weight are the adoption of the commercial grain industry, to which the open field system was poorly suited, and the development of group dissatisfaction with the established system, due to the failure to maintain the insularity of the settlements. It is in the light of these trends that the study will now attempt to examine the settlements established by Mennonites in Saskatchewan.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FOOTNOTES

[1]E. K. Francis, In Search of Utopia, (Altona, Manitoba: D. W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., 1955), p. 41.

[2]J. M. Hofer (ed.), "The Diary of Paul Tschetter, 1873," Mennonite Quarterly Review, V (1931), pp. 112 - 128, 198 - 219.

[3]Kempes Schnell (ed.), "John F. Funk's Land Inspection Trips as Recorded in his Diaries, 1872 and 1873," Mennonite Quarterly Review, XXIV (1950), pp. 295 - 311.

[4]Francis, op. cit., p. 43.

[5]Ibid., p. 44.

[6]Ibid., p. 43.

[7]J. Warkentin, "Mennonite Agriculture Settlements in Southern Manitoba," The Geographical Review, XLIX, 3(1959), p. 343.

[8]E. K. Francis, "Mennonite Institutions in Early Manitoba: A Study of their Origins," Agricultural History, XXII (1948), p. 143.

[9]E. K. Francis, "The Russian Mennonites: From Religious Group to Ethnic Group," American Journal of Sociology, LIV (1950), pp. 101 - 107.

[10]Ibid., p. 145.

[11]T. Lynn Smith, The Sociology of Rural Life, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), p. 204.

[12]Francis, "Mennonite Institutions in Early Manitoba," p. 145.

[13]Ibid., p. 149.

[14]Ibid., p. 150.

[15]Ibid., p. 151.

[16]Ibid., pp. 151, 152.

[17]George C. Homans, English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 207.
The system of linear village and open field systems was not known to the Mennonites in Prussia. The precedent for this system in Russia is exemplified in the agrarian system of the Russian peasantry who own land in widely scattered fields. This checker board pattern was characteristic of the "mir" under which land parcel size decreased by a series of heritance decisions could be redivided according to family size every few years.

[18]Francis, "Mennonite Institutions in Early Manitoba," p. 152.

[19]Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements in Southern Manitoba," p. 343.
Warkentin refers to the agreement signed between the members of the village of Blumenort in the East Reserve.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., p. 344.

[23]Statutes of Canada, 39 Vict. c. 19. An Act to Amend the Dominion Lands Act, sub-section 9. "...is hereby amended by adding thereto the following words: Provide further that, in the case of settlements being formed of immigrants in communities, (such for instance as those of Mennonites or Icelanders) the Minister of the Interior may vary or waive, in his discretion, the foregoing requirments as to residence and cultivation on each separate quarter-section as a homestead."

[24]Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements in Southern Manitoba," p. 345.

[25]Ibid.

[26]E. K. Francis, "In Search of Utopia, Manuscript and Research Notes," Manitoba Provincial Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

[27]Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements in Southern Manitoba," p. 348.

[28]Ibid.

[29]The streets were wider than normal to facilitate storage of cord wood and the harnessing and moving of horse-drawn farm machinery.

[30]Ibid., p. 349.

[31]C. Henry Smith, The Coming of the Russian Mennonites: An Episode in the Settling of the Last Frontier, 1874 - 1884, (Berne, Ind.: pp. 36, 37.

[32]Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 97.

[33]Ibid., p. 93.
The Bergthal group originated in the Bergthal colony in Russia and were slightly more progressive and expansionistic than the other Mennonite groups in Manitoba.

[34]Ibid.

[35]The municipalities of Douglas and Rheinland contained all of the West Reserve.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid., p. 101.

[38]Ibid., p. 102.

[39]Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements in Southern Manitoba," p. 362.

[40]Ibid., p. 364.

[41]Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 102.

[42]Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements in Southern Manitoba," p. 348.

[43]Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 103.

[44]Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements in Southern Manitoba," p. 348.

[45]The term "open field system" as used here refers to the narrow, strip-type fields used by the Mennonites in southern Manitoba, where they did not use fences.

[46]Francis, In Search of Utopia. p. 108.

[47]Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements in Southern Manitoba," p. 346.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## THE SASKATCHEWAN SETTLEMENTS

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ROSTHERN RESERVE

In the previous chapter, it was noted that the Mennonites attached a great deal of importance to the establishment of group settlements in order to protect their group solidarity and thus their insularity. The Mennonite Church of Manitoba considered the acquisition of land and the establishment of daughter colonies as its realm of concern. Involvement in this activity ensured the preservation of the Mennonite culture by preventing the indiscriminant mixing of Mennonites with the non-Mennonites who were settling the western lands at this time.

As the population of the Mennonite reserves grew through natural increase and continuous immigration from Russia and the United States, land within the confines of the reserves became more and more difficult to obtain. Therefore, the Mennonites were compelled to look for new land to establish daughter colonies following a pattern they had developed in Russia. New land for settlement purposes was available in the Northwest Territories simply for the asking.

Migration by Mennonites to the Northwest was at first a matter of private initiative rather than group action. In 1891, a small

group of several families from the West Reserve in Manitoba moved into the Rosthern area and took up homesteads. In a letter to J. M. Perry of Alweda, Dominion Land Agent in the Assiniboine District, D. H. Macdowall, Member of Parliament for Prince Albert, asked for information with regard to this particular group of settlers. Macdowall also inquired about the availability of a land guide to locate these Mennonites and instructed Inspector Cook of Duck Lake, north of Rosthern, to give this group all the assistance necessary to aid their settlement, should they be located.

This letter is interesting in that it is the first indication of Mennonite movement into the Northwest. Macdowall's concern about this small group of settlers was not misdirected. In the next few years, several hundred Mennonites began a migration resulting in a very prosperous farming area centered on the community of Rosthern.[1]

In February of 1894, the Manitoba Mennonites, through their solicitor, J. B. McLaren of Morden, Manitoba, approached the Secretary of the Department of the Interior about the reservation of land for the growing Mennonite population. This initial contact included a request for Township 7 Range 27 and for Township 33 Range 20, both west of the second principal meridian, and within present day Saskatchewan (see Figure 8).[2]

The Mennonites suggested these two townships because they were as yet unsettled. Stating as their primary aim the establishment of agricultural communities like those in Manitoba, they inquired as to the availability of other suitable land in the general area of the two townships already requested.

In reply to their request, the Mennonites were told that the

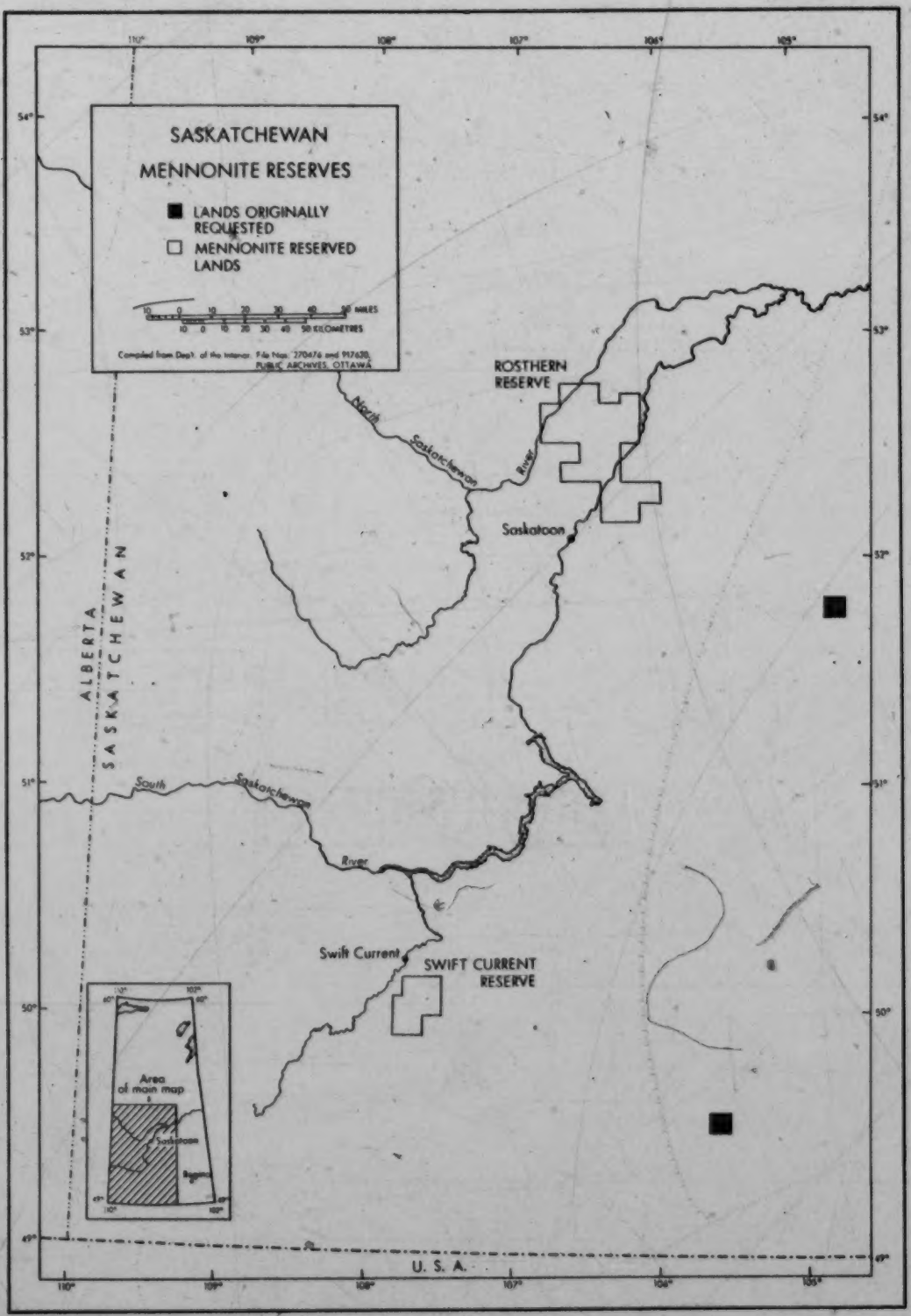

SASKATCHEWAN
MENNONITE RESERVES
LANDS ORIGINALLY REQUESTED
MENNONITE RESERVED LANDS
MILES
KILOMETRES
Compiled from Dept. of the Interior File Nos. 270676 and 917630, PUBLIC ARCHIVES, OTTAWA
ROSTHERN RESERVE
North Saskatchewan River
Saskatoon
ALBERTA
SASKATCHEWAN
South Saskatchewan River
Swift Current
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE
Area of main map
Saskatoon
Regina
U. S. A.

Figure 8

townships in question were not subdivided and thus not immediately available for settlement. In addition, the townships were a considerable distance from other settlements, which was quite satisfactory to the Mennonites. The townships also lacked railway service, and though not formally mentioned, this was probably the primary reason why the Mennonites rejected these townships as possible settlement sites. This argument is supported by the fact that the area eventually chosen for settlement was serviced by railway only a short time after the initial large-scale settlement of the Rosthern area.

While interest waned in the original two townships, negotiations were undertaken with regard to a reservation of land in the Territory of Saskatchewan, in what is now the Rosthern area (see Figure 9). The Mennonite solicitor, J. B. McLaren, Bishop Wiebe of the West Reserve, and Mr. Franz Froese, Oberschultze of the West Reserve, met with the Minister of the Interior, T. M. Daly, in 1894. At this meeting, and through subsequent letters, the Mennonites outlined the necessity for another reserve.

Prior to the commencement of negotiations, the Mennonites visited the area that is now the Rosthern area. They found the area favourable for large-scale settlement because it was fertile and was serviced by a railroad. The suggested reserve of land was to comprise Township 40 in Ranges 3, 4, and 5, and Township 41 in Range 4, all west of the third principal meridian. The terms of the reservation were to be quite simple. The Mennonites asked that all even-numbered sections in the four townships be reserved for entry by Mennonites alone. The odd-numbered sections, most of which were reserved for the railway companies, would be purchased from these

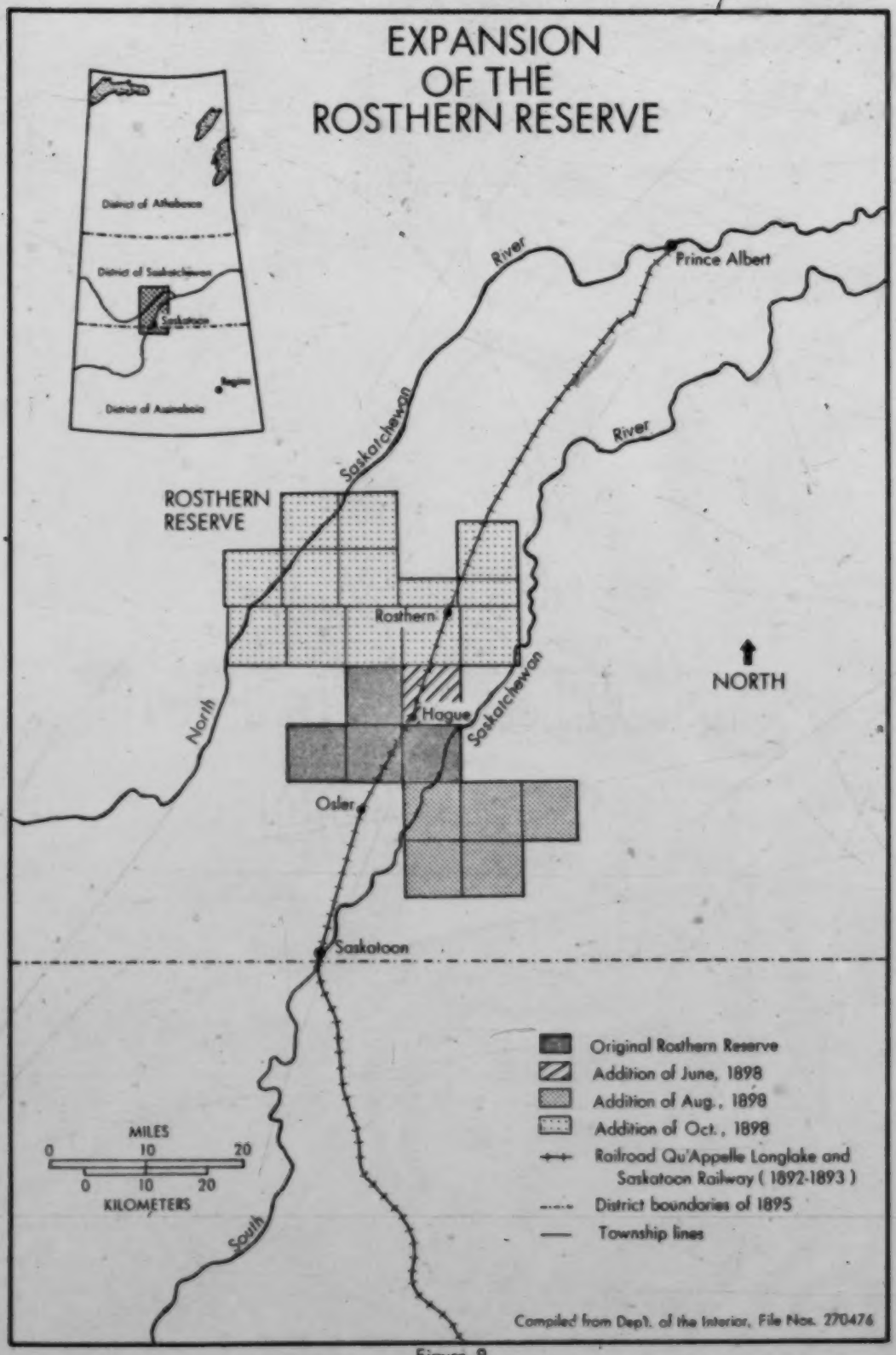

EXPANSION
OF THE
ROSTHERN RESERVE
District of Athabasca
District of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon
Regina
District of Assiniboia
ROSTHERN
RESERVE
Saskatchewan River
Prince Albert
North Saskatchewan River
Rosthern
Hague
Osler
Saskatoon
NORTH
South
MILES
0 10 20
0 10 20
KILOMETERS
Original Rosthern Reserve
Addition of June, 1898
Addition of Aug., 1898
Addition of Oct., 1898
Railroad Qu'Appelle Longlake and Saskatoon Railway ( 1892-1893 )
District boundaries of 1895
Township lines
Compiled from Dept. of the Interior, File Nos. 270476

Figure 9

companies by individuals or groups of Mennonites.

In addition to the above conditions, some of the Mennonites informed T. M. Daly of their desire to perform their homestead duties under the conditions of the "hamlet clause" (see page 89). On the other hand, many others desired to move directly onto their own homestead quarter-section. In Saskatchewan, the number of people opting for this latter arrangement was greater than those who took this option in the settlements established in the reserves in Manitoba. The reasons for this will be dicussed later.

In the establishment of the reserve in the Rosthern area, it was not necessary for the Mennonites to ask the government for financial assistance. At the time of initial settlement in Manitoba, the newly-arrived Mennonites received a loan from the federal government to aid in the purchase of building materials, machinery, seed grain, and foodstuffs for the first year. By the turn of the century, the situation had changed considerably. Many of the Mennonites moving from Manitoba to Saskatchewan were in need of aid, but that aid would be forthcoming from within the group rather than from the government. Many of the Mennonites had become well-established and were able to contribute to the re-establishment of their fellow Mennonites.[3]

In the winter of 1894, it was expected that fifty families from Manitoba would migrate to the proposed reserve in the Rosthern area in the spring. As the Mennonites had not received official government sanction for the reserve, they were reluctant to begin the movement. The Mennonites were becoming restless as the spring of 1895 approached and no answer was forthcoming. Some began to agitate for movement to North Dakota instead of the location in the Northwest.[4]

On February 22, 1895, the solicitor for the Mennonites was informed officially of the granting of the reservation in the Prince Albert district. The reservation of Township 40 in Ranges 3, 4, and 5, and Township 41 in Range 4, was granted by an Order-in-Council dated January 23, 1895, in accordance with all of the conditions of the initial Mennonite request.

On April 2, 1895, McLaren wrote the Minister of the Interior, T. M. Daly, concerning the odd-numbered sections in the reserved townships. This land was reserved for the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake, and Saskatchewan Land Company as part of a grant for the construction of a railroad line running from Saskatoon to Prince Albert. McLaren suggested, on behalf of the Mennonites, that the odd-numbered sections be reserved for the Mennonites for a period of five years at a price not to exceed $2.50 per acre. As the Department of the Interior was in no position to grant this request, the Mennonites were referred to Messrs. Osler, Hammond, and Black of the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake, and Saskatchewan Land Company.

Although not stated in the surviving records, some agreement must have been arrived at between the two parties concerned. If this was not the case, the influx of Mennonites was so great as to disallow other groups to purchase the odd-numbered sections within the reserved townships. This hypothesis is supported by the thoroughness with which the Mennonites occupied all of the land within the boundaries of the reserved townships. It is also supported by the fact that within three years of the original request for a reservation, the Mennonites were already asking for more land to be reserved in order to maintain the colony's insularity and ensure a place for all the Mennonites

who intended to settle within the growing community.

In January of 1898, the Mennonites informed the Department of the Interior of their desire to trade one of their reserved townships. They suggested that they were willing to give up their rights in Township 40 Range 5 in favour of the addition to the reserve of Township 41 Range 3. The fact that the latter township had more water available, combined with a desire on the part of the Mennonites for a more compact settlement, were the reasons given for the requested change.[5]

By the spring of 1898, the request was changed. The Mennonites were no longer willing to give up Township 40 Range 5 in exchange for the addition of Township 41 Range 3 to the reserve. Land in both the townships in question had been entered by the Mennonites to a limited extent. In addition to this, given that at least seventy families were expected to arrive during the course of 1898, the land availability problem would only be temporarily solved by the granting of the Mennonite request.[6]

At this point in the negotiations, the requested enlargement of the reserve became public knowledge and thus aroused some minor disapproval. A constituent of T. O. Davis, Member of Parliament for the Prince Albert district, voiced his objection to the enlargement. The argument against the addition to the reserve was based on the fact that the Mennonites had four townships reserved with exclusive homestead rights while at the same time, they were being allowed to enter on lands outside the reserve. The non-Mennonite settler, on the other hand, could only enter on land outside the reserve. Mennonites entering land outside the reserve were as numerous as those inside

the reserve, thus limiting the land available to the non-Mennonites.[7]

The complaint had no apparent effect on the reservation of the additional township, but is interesting in that similar complaints were registered against the reserve established later in the Swift Current area. It is a matter of question as to why more complaints were not lodged against the establishment of a large group of non-English speaking immigrants bound on maintaining their German language, their culture, and their insularity and separateness with the sanction of the government.

The Mennonites were notified of the approval of the addition to the reserve through their solicitor, J. B. McLaren. The Order-in-Council granting the addition was passed by the Privy Council on June 24, 1898. As mentioned previously, the addition had little effect in accommodating the Mennonites as they had already begun to enter homestead claims in the newly-reserved township. The additional township was only a temporary measure as immigration to the Rosthern area continued to increase.

In the fall of 1898, two additional requests were made by the Mennonites. They were designed to increase the size of the reserve in order to accommodate all Mennonites wishing to settle with the group. The first request was made to enlarge the reserve to the south. In this case, Township 38 in Ranges 2 and 3, and Township 39 in Ranges 1, 2, and 3, were requested and granted. The reservation was made effective until November 1, 1902, by Order of the Commissioner of Dominion Lands on August 19, 1898.[8]

The second and last request for enlargement of the reserve came later, in the fall of 1898. The Mennonites hoped to nearly triple the

size of their reservation by requesting special rights in Townships 42, 43, and 43a in Ranges 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, and in Townships 44 in Ranges 4 and 5. A delegation was sent to confer with Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, who visited Prince Albert in the fall of 1898. T. O. Davis, the Member of Parliament for Prince Albert, supported the request in the light that the Mennonites were "...first class settlers ...arriving with every train and naturally wish to settle together."[9] The request was officially registered and Dominion Land Agents were sent to investigate the possibility of enlarging the reserve.

Subsequent reports by the Dominion Land Agents revealed that the Mennonites had already settled most of the even-numbered sections within the townships requested. Only in Townships 44 Range 3, and Townships 42 and 43 in Range 6, were all of the even-numbered townships available. The land available for homestead entry within the area requested amounted to only twenty-five per cent of the total homestead land originally available in the proposed reserve addition.[10]

Given this situation, it was not really necessary to reserve the townships in question, as only a small portion was available for settlement. The government response to this situation was to refuse the request for a five-year reserve of the land. Instead they allowed a one-year reservation of the land requested.[11] The addition to the reserve was made by way of a Departmental Order rather than by the usual Order-in-Council. The reservation of all even-numbered sections of Townships 42, 43, and 43a in Ranges 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 and Township 44 in Ranges 4 and 5 was in effect from October 15, 1898 to October 14, 1899.[12] This reservation was the last one approved by the government for the Mennonites in the Rosthern area of Saskatchewan.

The total amount of land reserved for the exclusive settlement by Mennonites in the Rosthern area was twenty-four townships, thus nearly equalling the twenty-five townships that were reserved for their predecessors in Manitoba. However, the amount of land reserved for the Mennonites in present-day Saskatchewan was only about half of what it had been in Manitoba. In Saskatchewan, only the even-numbered sections were reserved for Mennonites while the bulk of the odd-numbered sections had to be purchased from the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake, and Saskatchewan Land Company. The reserved land would accommodate about fifteen hundred individual Mennonite homestead entries.

PROCESS OF SETTLEMENT IN THE ROSTHERN RESERVE

In 1891, the first 143 Mennonites bound for Saskatchewan arrived in Canada via the Quebec port of entry.[13] After 1891, Mennonite immigration increased. Mr. Julius Siemens, a Dominion Immigration agent, reported visiting Nebraska and Kansas, where a great many Russian Mennonites had settled at the time of the Mennonite movement into Manitoba. Mr. Siemens reported that he anticipated a large scale movement of Mennonites from these areas into Canada's Northwest Territories (i.e. the Rosthern area).[14] In addition to the above, Mr. Hespeler, an immigration agent who was previously closely associated with the movement of Mennonites from Russia to Manitoba, reported having selected three Mennonites to visit their former countrymen in Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. The object of this visit was to induce Mennonites settled there to migrate to the Canadian Northwest.[15]

This anticipated immigration, accompanied by the growing scarcity of land in Manitoba, caused by both the incoming Mennonite immigrants

and the steadily increasing population, forced the Mennonites to look elsewhere for land. The rapid growth of the Rosthern Reserve indicates the speed with which the Mennonites occupied the land (see Figure 9).

The first direct reference to the Mennonite population in the Rosthern area is contained in a report by John McTaggart, the Dominion Lands and Immigration Agent for the Prince Albert area:

> "The only colony we have in this district is that of the Mennonites. They are steadily coming - some from Manitoba, others directly from Russia. They occupy a stretch of country lying south of Duck Lake, between the two Saskatchewan Rivers, in Townships 40 up to 44 in Ranges 2 to 5 west of the 3rd Meridian...It is said that they are very prosperous, the people of the neighbouring settlements doing a good business with them... According to the entries, I should say that they number not less than 200 persons."[16]

By 1894, there were about four hundred Mennonites in the Rosthern area. This situation existed one year prior to the Rheinland Mennonite Association of Manitoba requesting a reserve in the area. Thus the Rosthern area was well known to the Mennonites of Manitoba, if one assumes an exchange of information between the two areas, before a reserve was granted.

Immigration in the following years was relatively steady. In 1895, the Mennonite population was increased by 250 Mennonites, mostly from the Manitoba Reserves. By 1896, the Mennonite population in the Rosthern area was estimated at eight hundred to one thousand people, concentrated mainly in the area of Townships 40 to 44 and Ranges 3 to 6, all west of the third principal meridian. In 1897, 250 additional families arrived, comprising ten to twelve hundred persons. This taxed the land available in the reserve to the limit.[17]

Considering this situation, it is understandable that the

Mennonites began negotiations to acquire an extension to the reserve.[18] Mennonites migrating from Manitoba did not all wish to settle in the reserve or in the villages that were being established in 1895. The trend toward living on one's quarter-section homestead was much more pronounced in the Rosthern area than it was in the Manitoba Reserves. This trend is indicated by the establishment of the Rosthern area strassendorf villages. With only a few exceptions, the villages were located on the reserve, or adjacent to it, as it existed in 1895, while subsequent settlement was mainly on individual quarter-sections.

In addition, with few exceptions, the villages were established in 1895. Mennonite settlers arriving after the 1894-95 reservations had been filled tended not to settle in the strassendorf village form, but settled instead on their own homestead quarter-sections. There were twenty-three townships set aside after 1895 for Mennonite settlements and these townships are characterized by the dispersed settlement pattern, while the 1895 reserve was characterized by agglomerated settlement in the form of the strassendorf village.

In Manitoba in 1876, the East Reserve was filling up and new arrivals from Russia were finding land harder to obtain. According to the agreement with the federal government, an additional reserve was promised. It was the Furstenland (Old Colony) group, a conservative element, that urged the establishment of this second reserve, later called the West Reserve. The Furstenland group of Mennonites were the instigators of the movement to approach the government about the establishment of the Rosthern Reserve in 1894.

In order to understand the form that this settlement took, it is

necessary to gain an understanding of the religious composition of the settlers migrating into the Rosthern area. In general, the Mennonite churches or congregations in Manitoba at the time of the migration to the Rosthern area could be designated as to their degree of conservatism or desire to maintain the "old ways", resisting change in religious as well as secular affairs. The conservative group was characterized by its attempt to maintain, to as great an extent as possible, all of the historical traditions developed in the Russian Mennonite settlements. The distinguishing elements of this group are well-illustrated in their desire to maintain the austere dress code and the simple church service.[19]

Apart from the conservative Furstenland group, there were two other groups of only slightly less conservative leanings. The Chortitz Church of the East Reserve, named after the first Mennonite colony in Russia, and the Sommerfeld Church of the West Reserve, were both splinter groups of the more progressive-minded Bergthaler group. These two groups were of the same degree of conservatism, and co-operated closely in religious and secular matters. Apart from a relatively small number of less conservative Mennonites, these conservative groups, especially the Old Colony Furstenland, formed the majority of the initial movement to the Rosthern Reserve. It was this group that initiated the negotiations with the government to establish the initial four-township reserve.[20]

The process of occupying the land was in fact quite simple. A group of intending Mennonite settlers, often neighbours or relatives in Manitoba, would decide to form a village. The land necessary to form the village would be purchased in the form of a half-section or

section, depending on the number of people desiring to form a village. The homesteads were chosen, wherever possible, close to the village location to minimize travel time from farmstead to field. In many cases, the village form and land use was copied directly from the Manitoba settlements. In some of the villages the land was divided by the open field system, while in other villages it was not.[21]

The open field economy, in association with the strassendorf village settlement, was adopted in some of the new settlements in the Rosthern area in 1895 for two reasons. First, the open field villages of Manitoba, although in the process of abandonment, were still very much in evidence in the West Reserve in Manitoba, especially among the more conservative groups. For example, the Furstenland faction with their ultra-conservative outlook managed to keep the villages and associated open field operating in the West Reserve until after World War I. The last of the open fields were farmed in 1926.[22]

Second, the Old Colony Furstenland people formed the majority of the migrants to Rosthern. They were characterized by their desire to maintain the old traditions. One of the most obvious was the traditional agricultural system. Furthermore, their movement to the West was intended to leave the worldliness that was encroaching on the Manitoba reserves and causing extensive alterations in these old traditions.[23] Therefore, the migrants, given the opportunity of starting afresh and with their strongly held traditions, re-established the strassendorf village and the associated open field economy.

The open field economy was not as universally adopted in the Rosthern Reserve as it was in the Manitoba reserves. The Rosthern Reserve consisted of twenty-four townships in which seventeen villages

were established. These villages were all concentrated near the south end of the Rosthern Reserve in an area initially settled by the conservative Mennonite element. The Rosthern Reserve was only slightly smaller than the combined area of the two Manitoba Reserves, which was twenty-four townships. In the Manitoba Reserves, the Mennonites established more than 115 villages which were in various stages of development and modification at the time of the migration to the Rosthern Reserve. The majority of Mennonites moving to the Rosthern area decided to settle on individual homesteads.

The open field system did not survive long after its establishment in the Rosthern Reserve. In the village of Neuanlage, where the open field system was first established, it lasted less than five years. It was abandoned because of the lack of co-operation of one new villager who triggered its abandonment. The villager in question requested membership in the village, thereby agreeing to abide by all the village bylaws when he was accepted by the village membership. Once accepted into the village community, he agreed to all of the bylaws with the exception of that provision requiring that he submit his homestead quarter-section to division under open field economy. There had been some dissatisfaction with the operation of the open field system as regards the quality and quantity of land in its shared distribution. The rejection of the system by one individual and his refusal to pool his quarter-section started a wave of abandonment that resulted in the disintegration of the system in the village of Neuanlage. From about 1900 onward, Neuanlage was a village of farm operators, as the inhabitants farmed their own quarter-sections while maintaining their residences within the village.[24]

The process of abandonment of the open field economy is not clear in the other villages that adopted it, but it is evident that the system was abandoned very early for many of the same reasons that it proved unworkable in Manitoba (see Chapter 2). Although the open field system was abandoned, the settlement form resulting from it remains in a modified form today. The remnant form and the extent of its survival will be discussed in the next chapter.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE

The establishment of the Swift Current Reserve was a great deal less complicated than the establishment of the Rosthern Reserve. By 1904, it had become necessary, due to a number of circumstances which will be discussed later, to acquire more land to enable those Mennonites wishing to move out of the Manitoba reserves to settle on suitable lands in a group settlement pattern. Therefore, the Mennonite community of Manitoba once again approached the federal government with a request.

On July 5, 1904, Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, was introduced to Mr. Franz Froese in a letter from Johann Wiebe, Bishop of the Community of Rheinland Mennonites.[25] Mr. Froese was the President or Oberschultz of the West Reserve Mennonites and was about to begin negotiations for a second reserve outside the province of Manitoba.

Franz Froese, on behalf of the members of the Rheinland Mennonite Association of Manitoba, requested reservation of Townships 13 and 14 in Range 12, Townships 12, 13, and 14 in Range 13, and the eastern halves of Townships 12 and 13 in Range 14, all west of the third principal meridian. It was asked that the new reserve be made subject

to similar conditions to which each of the three previous Mennonite reservations were subject.

The terms of the reservation were specified. No one, unless approved by the Rheinland Mennonite Association of Manitoba or the Department of the Interior, was to be allowed to make homestead entry within the tract designated as the Mennonite reserve. The members of the Association were to be permitted, upon homesteading any even-numbered section, to contract for the purchase of the adjoining odd-numbered sections at three dollars an acre. The amount of the purchase was to be paid in ten annual installments with an interest on the unpaid balance of five percent per annum. The patents on these odd-numbered sections were to be withheld until the homestead requirements were met on the even-numbered section.

Before the final approval could be given to the establishment of a reserve, land inspectors were requested to report on the quality and quantity of land available within the proposed reserve. An examination of the records for that area found that in the northern-most two and one-half townships, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company had accepted most of the odd-numbered sections, and of those, had patented six sections in Township 14 in Range 13. All other lands within the reserve, exclusive of Hudson's Bay Company land, school land, and one quarter-section in the extreme northeast corner of the reserve, were at the disposal of the Dominion Lands Branch and thus abailable for homesteading (see Figure 10).

A homestead inspector was dispatched from Brandon, Manitoba to inspect the lands within the reserve. Jas A. Gibson was also asked to ascertain whether or not the establishment of a Mennonite reserve

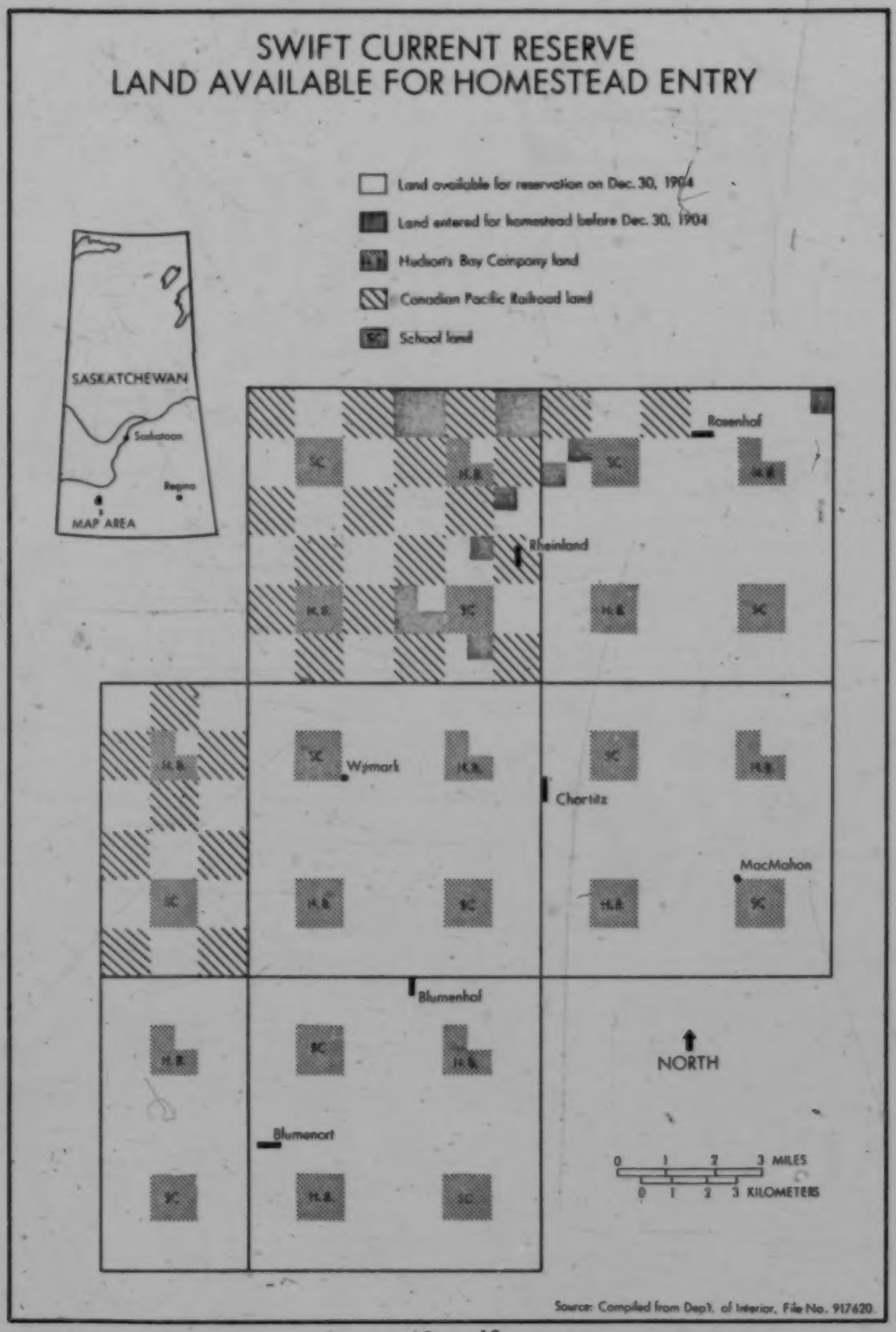

SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE
LAND AVAILABLE FOR HOMESTEAD ENTRY
Land available for reservation on Dec. 30, 1904
Land entered for homestead before Dec. 30, 1904
Hudson's Bay Company land
Canadian Pacific Railroad land
School land
SASKATCHEWAN
Saskatoon
Regina
MAP AREA
Rosenhof
Rheinland
Wymark
Chortitz
MacMahon
Blumenhof
Blumenort
NORTH
0 1 2 3 MILES
0 1 2 3 KILOMETERS
Source: Compiled from Dept. of Interior, File No. 917620.

Figure 10

in the Swift Current area would interfere with any industry already established in the neighbourhood.

Gibson found the land to be of "excellent quality for grain growing". He was able to collect samples of wheat, oats, and barley which were grown four miles to the north of the proposed reserve. The grains were of good quality despite the fact that 1904 had been drier than either of the two preceeding years. Gibson reported the soil as being a clay loam with a clay subsoil and was only slightly stoney along the creek beds and hills. Furthermore, water, which was essential to settlement, could be obtained at a depth of twenty-five feet on a township adjoining the as-yet unsettled proposed reserve. Gibson also made inquiries of ranchers in the district and of the people of Swift Current concerning possible objections to the proposed Mennonite colony. The result of these inquiries showed that the residents of the area had no objections to the proposed influx of Mennonite settlers.[26]

The dates of correspondence concerning the inspection of the land and Clifford Sifton's recommendation in favour of the reservation indicate that Sifton could not have considered the report submitted by Mr. Gibson in recommending the reservation. Nevertheless, the exchange does lend valuable insight into the physical quality of the proposed reserve and the attitudes of the established residents to this relatively large distinctive cultural element.

In his recommendation to the Governor-General in Council, Sifton suggested that the land requested was generally thought of as being unsuitable for the "ordinary settlers". This view was supported by the lack of demand for land in the area previously designated as

Palliser's Triangle.[27] The Department had not previously felt obliged to encourage settlement in the area because of the arid nature of the climate.[28]

Counterbalancing the views expressed by Sifton, the Mennonites were anxious to provide land for those of their group that were desirous of settling in the Northwest Territories. The establishment of a reserve of land would allow the intending Mennonite settlers to recreate a familiar social environment. As was the case with the migration to the Rosthern area, the Mennonites did not request any government financial aid to establish their communities. The Rheinland Mennonite Association of Manitoba was prepared instead to advance the necessary monetary assistance out of their own funds.

The Order-in-Council granting to the Mennonites as a reserve the six townships they requested was issued on August 13, 1904. All of the land at the disposal of the Dominion Lands Branch within the six townships was reserved for the exclusive use by Mennonites who could prove that they were affiliated with the Rheinland Mennonite Association of Manitoba. This was in effect for a period of three years after August 13, 1904. In fact, the reserved land was only thrown open for entry by the general public on October 1, 1909, approximately five years after initial reservation. Thus the Mennonites had five years of relative isolation to establish their settlement pattern in this area.

PROCESS OF SETTLING IN SWIFT CURRENT

The process of occupying the land in the Swift Current area was a great deal less complicated than the settlement and occupation of

the land in the Rosthern area. In the Rosthern area, the Mennonites attempted to recreate a cultural landscape similar to that created initially in Manitoba. The abandonment of the open field system illustrates the unsuitability of this attempt.

In the Swift Current area, as in the initial settlement of the Rosthern area, the Mennonites involved were representatives of one of the more conservative elements of the entire sect. The Mennonites migrating to Swift Current were made up mostly of the Sommerfeld congregation of the West Reserve. Like the Old Colony Furstenland group, they had a strong desire to maintain the old traditions which included a close knit semi-communal village habitat. The Sommerfeld group did not attempt however to re-establish the open field economy with their new villages in the Swift Current Reserve, the reasons for which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The strassendorf village plan was recreated as was the common pasture and the system of village government, but the migrants chose independent quarter-section farms rather than the communal open field economy. The migrants maintained their residences and social obligations in the village, creating a compromise between the semi-communal agglomerated settlement of the Russian Ukraine and southern Manitoba, and the dispersed settlement pattern characteristic of the rectangular survey of Western Canada.

In the spring of 1905, the Mennonites in the Swift Current Reserve asked to be allowed to settle their reserve according to the traditional village pattern. The Department of the Interior replied that there would be no objection to such a plan, but the Mennonites would have to adhere to the provisions of Clause 37 of the Dominions Land Act which

reads as follows:[29]

> "If a number of homestead settlers, embracing at least twenty families, with a view to greater convenience in the establishment of schools and churches, and to the attainment of social advantages of like character, ask to be allowed to settle together in a hamlet or village, the Minister may in his discretion, vary or dispose with the foregoing requirements as to residence, but not as to the cultivation of each separate quarter section entered as a homestead.[30]

At the same time, the Mennonites asked if they could be allowed to make the entries for their Swift Current Reserve homesteads at the Dominion Land Office in Winnipeg as this would be more convenient considering the source of migration. This request was refused, while on the other hand, individuals and groups of Mennonites were allowed to appoint some person at Regina or in the vicinity of the reserve to make the homestead entry on their behalf. This process allowed for the convenient entry of lands well in advance of actual occupation of the land. The process also presented some problems by entering land not actually inspected.

Non-Mennonite squatters, although not in large numbers, had invaded the reserve before and after its creation. The Mennonite choice of land was usually made before leaving Manitoba, thus creating an obvious conflict if that choice should coincide with the squatter's choice. Several instances of this type did arise, as they had in the Rosthern Reserve, and were duly reported to the Minister of the Interior.[31] Conflicts of this nature were obviously crucial to the intending settlers on an individual basis, but did not cause the group as a whole much concern.

The process of establishing a Mennonite village was of a gradual

nature owing to the relatively slow way in which the settlers were arriving. The government requirement of twenty families could not necessarily always be met in the first year that the village was established. In fact, only four of the eventual sixteen villages ever petitioned the Department for status as a village (see Appendix 5).

After the complaints mentioned earlier were aired, the Minister of the Interior instructed the Homestead Inspectors via P. G. Keys, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, to protect the entries granted to the Mennonites within the Reserve whether or not the homesteaders were performing their duties under the hamlet clause.

From the preceeding discussion, it can be seen that the Mennonites intended to settle after their traditional fashion. The Mennonites established sixteen villages within the reserved townships, the survival and form of which will be discussed in a later chapter.

The land in the Swift Current Reserve was set aside in the late summer of 1904 in anticipation of a large-scale movement of Mennonites from the West Reserve in Manitoba. Given that the Mennonites were to homestead the even-numbered sections, the Swift Current Reserve would accommodate nearly four hundred homestead entries or four hundred Mennonite families could move onto the reserve.

There is little indication as to the size of the movement to Swift Current in the spring and summer of 1905, but by the spring of 1906, 230 individual homesteads had been entered.[32] The fact that the intending homesteaders could appoint an agent to enter on their behalf tends to make an accurate estimation of the Mennonite population within the reserve difficult. Furthermore, the settlers did not always move

their whole family out to the reserve in the first year. It was usually the head of the household and possibly the oldest son or sons who went out first to locate the land and establish the farmstead. In the majority of these cases, the father and son would both enter homesteads while maintaining a common residence, generally on the father's land within the village.[33]

In the spring of 1906, it was expected that 104 railway box cars full of agricultural equipment and supplies, along with about 450 persons, would arrive at Swift Current. The arrival at the reserve would result in the occupation of the majority of the remaining homesteads. Here again, as noted previously, it is difficult to estimate the actual number of homesteads entered. Nevertheless, the reserve was almost completely taken up by 1909 (see Figure 11). The only land left was that which was considered unsuitable for agriculture when the reserve was officially thrown open in 1909.

As we have seen, the process of settlement in both the Rosthern and Swift Current settlements entailed the establishment of a reserve of land in order to permit the compact group settlement, thus ensuring a minimum of contact with other cultural groups. In both cases, the settlement of the reserves was relatively rapid, due in part to the organization of the mother colony in Manitoba, and in part to the desire to form a compact group settlement. The Mennonites in both cases settled the land in a combination of villages and individual homesteads, the detailed differences and similarities of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

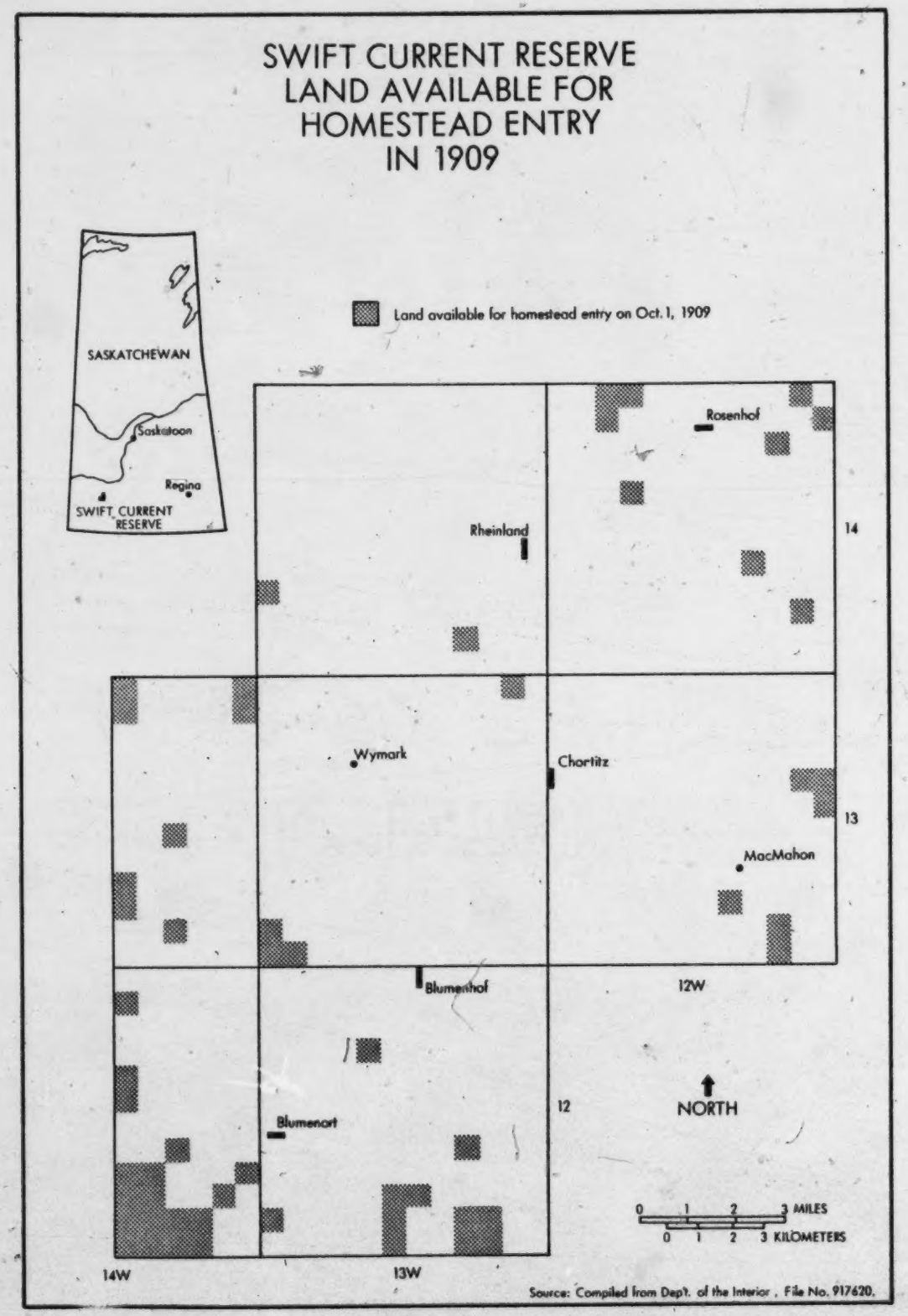

SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE
LAND AVAILABLE FOR
HOMESTEAD ENTRY
IN 1909
SASKATCHEWAN
Saskatoon
Regina
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE
Land available for homestead entry on Oct. 1, 1909
Rosenhof
Rheinland
14
Wymark
Chortitz
13
MacMahon
Blumenhof
12W
12
NORTH
Blumenort
0 1 2 3 MILES
0 1 2 3 KILOMETERS
14W
13W
Source: Compiled from Dept. of the Interior, File No. 917620.

Figure 11

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FOOTNOTES

[1]Based on correspondence between D. H. Macdowall, Member of Parliament for Prince Albert, and J. M. Perry, Olaweda, Assiniboine District; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[2]Based on correspondence between J. B. McLaren and the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, dated February 21, 1894; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[3]E. K. Francis, Manuscript and Research Notes for In Search of Utopia, (Legislative Library and Provincial Archives, Province of Manitoba), p. 328.

By 1893, when the Mennonites first decided it was essential to found a daughter colony in the Northwest Territories, they had sufficient wealth as a group to finance their co-religionists in a new colony. Aided by the fact that the site of the new colony would be a relatively short distance from the mother colony, the Mennonites found no trouble in looking after their own financial needs. Financial aid was also forthcoming from wealthy individual farmers and from the funds held in trust by the "Waisenamt" in the form of loans against first mortgages on homesteads. In addition to the above, a special tax was levied by the Manitoba Mennonite Community to secure monies to aid intending settlers. The special levée was $10.00 per quarter-section of land owned and $2.50 per landless family. This tax aided eighteen to twenty families to move to the Northwest Territories.

[4]Based on correspondence between J. B. McLaren and the Department of the Interior, dated February 20, 1895; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[5]Based on correspondence between J. B. McLaren and the Department of the Interior, dated January 27, 1898; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[6]Based on correspondence between Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior and the Deputy Minister of the Interior, dated April 23, 1898; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[7]Based on correspondence between T. O. Davis, Member of Parliament for Prince Albert and Charles Fisher of Duck Lake, dated February 26, 1898; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[8]Mennonite Reserves - a list of Mennonite Reserves containing the size and location of each; compiled for the Department of the Interior in 1908; Saskatchewan Provincial Archives file No. 917620.

[9]Based on correspondence between T. O. Davis, Member of Parliament for Prince Albert and Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, dated September 19, 1898; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[10]Based on correspondence between Mr. Goodeve and Jas. A. Smart, Deputy Minister of the Interior, dated September 29, 1898; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[11]Based on correspondence between T. O. Davis, Member of Parliament for Prince Albert and John R. Hall, Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior, dated October 14, 1898; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[12]Based on a series of letters exchanged between John R. Hall, Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Franz Schroeder of Rosthern, dated throughout the spring of 1899, and also based on correspondence between Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, and the Governor-General of Canada, dated February 14, 1900; Public Archives file No. 270476.

[13]Sessional Papers - Number 7 (1892), Volume 25 (no. 5).

[14]Sessional Papers - Number 7 (1892), p. 35.

[15]Sessional Papers - Number 7 (1892), p. 35.

[16]Sessional Papers - Number 13 (1894), Part II, p. 146.

[17]E. K. Francis, Manuscript and Research Notes for <u>In Search of Utopia</u>, (Legislative Library and Provincial Archives, Province of Manitoba), p. 326.

[18]Considering the land within the reserve, exclusive of Hudson's Bay Land, School Land, and all odd-numbered sections held by the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake, and Saskatchewan Land Company, there are approximately 16 sections or 64 quarter-sections available for homesteading purposes. The reserve was 4 townships containing approximately 256 homesteads. Allowing for the unsuitability of some quarter-sections, as well as for the Mennonites who wished not to settle on the reserved land, it was mandatory that the Mennonites seek an extension to the reserve as the population numbered about five hundred individual Mennonite families.

[19]The Furstenland Mennonites were termed "Old Colony" Mennonites in Manitoba and their branch of the Mennonite church is called the Old Colony Mennonite Church. After the movement to Rosthern, the group of Manitoba Mennonites belonging to the Sommerfeld congregation took the name "Old Colony" Mennonites. The Sommerfeld Menn-

onites moving to the Swift Current Reserve did not change their name. Although differing slightly on some religious matters, these three groups shared a common denominator which was carried over into secular life. It is difficult, therefore, to give this conservative element a common name. The term "Old Colony" has certain connotations and must not be misused, while for the purposes of this paper, these particular factions will be referred to as the conservative element of the Mennonite group.

[20]Francis, Manuscript and Research Notes for In Search of Utopia, (Legislative Library and Provincial Archives, Province of Manitoba), p. 327.

[21]The combination of village and open field system no longer exists in the Rosthern Reserve, nor are there sufficient vestiges to allow the reconstruction of a village plan. From various secondhand accounts of the pioneers of the area, it was ascertained that the village and field arrangements did not differ markedly from the example given of the hypothetical Manitoba Mennonite village on page 52.

[22]John Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements of Southern Manitoba," The Geographical Review, XLIX, 3 (1959), p. 365.

[23]Ibid., p. 364.

[24]Based on personal interviews with older members of the Mennonite communities involved. Many of these interviews are now housed in the Saskatchewan Provincial Archives in the "Towards a New Past" collection.

[25]Based on correspondence between Bishop Johann Wiebe of Rosengart, Manitoba and Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, dated July 5, 1904; Saskatchewan Provincial Archives file No. 917620.

[26]Based on correspondences between Jas. A. Gibson, homestead inspector at Brandon, Manitoba, and the Secretary of the Department of the Interior at Ottawa, dated August 17, 1904; Saskatchewan Provincial Archives file No. 917620.

[27]"Palliser's Triangle" was an area designated as arid, comprising the southwest and southeast portions of present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta. This area was designated by Captain John Palliser and thus bears his name.

[28]Based on correspondence between Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, and the Governor-General-in-Council, dated July 15, 1904; Saskatchewan Provincial Archives file No. 917620.

[29]Based on correspondence between P. C Keys, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, and McLaren, McLeod and Black, Barristers, of Morden, Manitoba, dated April 6, 1905; Saskatchewan Provincial Archives file No. 917620.

[30]The Revised Statutes of Canada. Volume 1, "The Dominion Lands Act," 46 V., c. 17, s. 1, part., Chapter 54, Clause 37, p. 829.

[31]The Mennonites had additional problems in those initial stages of settlement, many of which were a repetition of similar problems encountered in Rosthern. McLaren, McLeod and Black, solicitors for the Mennonite association, listed the following complaints:

1. "Township 12, Range 13 West of the 3rd was not surveyed at the time the reserve was set apart...There are a number of Mennonites now squatted in the Township, a number more waiting around Swift Current till the Township is open for homestead, and there are more who will not leave here to take up homesteads there as they fear that they will never get them..."
2. "A number of non-Mennonites have been allowed to homestead on the reserve by the Agent at Regina."
3. "These Mennonites wish to do their homesteading on the hamlet system. I had a petition forwarded to the Minister of the Interior in December 1904, file 917620, and received a reply on the 6th April 1905 stating that it would be necessary before this petition could be granted, to submit an application to that effect to the Minister, signed by at least twenty families as provided by clause 37 of the Dominion Lands Act. None of the hamlets yet have twenty settlers in them, and the inspectors of the Department are poking around and notifying the homesteaders, in these hamlets, to get on their land...The society has three years to settle the reserve, and before that time is up, every homestead that is worth taking in the reserve will be settled if the officials simply let them alone, so that I cannot understand why the inspectors should meddle with the homesteaders that are there, for there certainly is no one else entitled to take up the homesteads,...and the whole matter of the inspectors coming after these people must be on the motion of some one in the Department. I am sure that you will agree with me that it is most desirable to settle these people out on these lands, as they make admirable farmers, and open up the districts where no one else will settle,...all they (Inspectors) seemed to have to do was to let the matter alone and the reserve would be settled...".

Based on correspondence between J. B. McLaren and Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, dated July 4, 1906; Saskatchewan Provincial Archives file No. 917620.

In most cases, it seems that the disputes between Mennonites and non-Mennonite squatters were settled without hard feelings, as land was readily available within the reserve. This basic concern in many cases was the infiltration by non-Mennonites of the proposed Mennonite group settlement.

[32]Based on correspondence between J. B. McLaren and Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, dated March 26, 1906; Saskatchewan Provincial Archives file No. 917620.

[33] Based on data collected from homestead files and interviews with surviving homesteaders and their descendents. Interviews were conducted in the summer of 1974. The following quotation from a letter to McLaren, McLeod and Black from the Department of the Interior dated December 10, 1906, clarifies the option open in this case: "The homesteader was required to own buildings either on his homestead or in the hamlet and perform the ordinary cultivation duties, except where the homesteader elected to reside with his father on the latter's land in the hamlet in which event the extra cultivation must be performed".

# CHAPTER FIVE

## SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND FORM

### INTRODUCTION

As was the case with the Manitoba Reserves and the older Russian settlements, the villages making up the Mennonite settlements of both the Saskatchewan Reserves were the result of a desire to establish and maintain a certain social and religious organization. The essence of this organization was co-operation in the maintenance of the social infrastructure and thus the village environment was considered essential.

It was for the above reason, as well as for those of religious influence and past experience, that the conservative element of the Mennonites moving into Saskatchewan chose to settle in villages. In addition, there were a number of practical inducements to village settlement, as are evidenced by the surviving petitions submitted by the villagers in the Swift Current Reserve (see Appendix 5). There was a strong desire to minimize the cost and inconvenience of supplying essential water to each farmer. In an area where water was exceptionally scarce, and at a time when the settlers were establishing themselves, it was thought to be less expensive and more convenient to provide one well to serve a group of farmers living in close proximity

to each other than it would be to provide one well for each of the farmers on their individual homesteads. Similar reasoning can be applied to the construction and maintenance of roads and drainage ditches, pasture fences, churches, and schools. In addition, it proved convenient to have one's neighbours close at hand in event of an emergency or during major construction projects and other major undertakings.

The form of the administrative function of the villages transferred from the Mennonite settlements in Manitoba to Saskatchewan was similar. The chief individual village administrator was termed the "Schultz" or mayor, and was elected by the assembly of all landowners in the village. Two other officials aiding in the village administration were responsible for the village fire insurance scheme and the village common pasture. Thus the village administration was the responsibility of three elected officers, which often combined in one or two persons.

All major expenditures or changes in rules or by-laws required a majority vote from an assembly of all the landowning villagers. Each of the men responsible for the village administration could be and usually was, a preacher in the village church. In addition to this, all of the villagers were members of the church. In fact, a meeting of the village assembly or council was identical with a meeting of the church congregation. Thus, secular and religious matters were very closely linked. It was the church that gave authority to the secular or civil administration. The church, via the process of communication, was used as the source of discipline in secular as well as in religious matters. Expulsion from the church for wrongdoing meant, at least,

psychological expulsion from the community, and could lead to one's physical expulsion as well. It was under these social conditions that the organized villages were established and maintained during those early days around the turn of the century in both Saskatchewan reserves.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE MENNONITE RESERVES

The physical geography of the Rosthern Reserve varied slightly from the terrain of the West Reserve in Manitoba. The elevation of the Rosthern Reserve is about 1500 feet above sea level. Climatically, the area is slightly more moist than the Swift Current Reserve, with a mean annual precipitation of more than 14 inches. The two Reserves compare favourably as regards temperature. Each experiences about 100 frost-free days per annum, and between 2600 and 2800 degree-days above 42°F between May 1 and September 30. Both areas chosen by the Mennonites were well within the temperature ranges necessary for wheat cultivation.[1]

The natural vegetation cover of the Rosthern Reserve consists of mixed prairie grasses with scattered aspen poplar groves (Populus tremuloides), characteristic of what is known as the "parkland belt". The vegetation complex is underlain by black chernozemic soil in the majority of areas, while solonetzic and regosolic soils appear in the river valleys and in the northern fringe of the reserved lands. Overall, the area is well-suited for grain crop cultivation provided moderate moisture conservation practises are employed.

The land surface is not unlike the West Reserve in Manitoba. It is relatively flat, with slopes of less than ten percent, owing to its

glacial history. It is largely covered by lacustrine deposits interspersed with hummocky glacial moraine. Local relief is largely due to the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, which are incised about 100 feet below the surface topography. The rivers cross the Reserve in Townships 44 and 45 in Ranges 6 and 7, in the case of the North Saskatchewan River, and in Townships 39 and 40 in Ranges 2 and 3 in the case of the South Saskatchewan River (see Figure 9).

The area chosen by the Mennonites for the location of the Swift Current Reserve was in many ways similar to the landscape of the West Reserve in Manitoba and the Rosthern Reserve. The elevation of the Swift Current Reserve is about 2400 feet above sea level. Climatically, the area is located in the Palliser Triangle and thus is semi-arid in character, receiving about 12 to 14 inches of precipitation annually. The natural vegetation consists of a mixture of prairie grasses underlain with brown and dark-brown chernozemic soils. Overall, the area of the Reserve has proven suitable for dryland grain farming, provided the farmer employs the necessary conservation methods when cultivating the land.

The most noticeable feature of the surface topography of the Swift Current Reserve is its relative flatness, rather like the Rosthern Reserve. The vast majority of the Reserve is gently rolling with slopes of less than ten percent. In the western and northeastern fringes of the Reserve, the land becomes slightly more rolling, with slopes increasing to thirty percent over more than forty percent of these areas. The gently rolling nature of the area is attributed to the glacial geology of the area. The surface geology consists mainly of hummocky, dead ice and glacial disintegration features, with

localized kettled lacustrine deposits. The local relief, on the order of 50 to 100 feet, is the result of such features as prairie mounds, kettles, and moraine complexes.[2]

The physical terrain of both reserves provided an abundance of relatively level land for village location. Unlike the East Reserve in Manitoba, there was no predominant drainage pattern with which to orient the settlement pattern. Surface water in the Swift Current Reserve, and to a lesser extent in the Rosthern Reserve, was minimal, making wells the obvious water source. The overall settlement pattern of the Saskatchewan Reserves could be more closely compared to the West Reserve in Manitoba than to the poorly-drained and wooded East Reserve. This similarity was due partially to the similarity of terrain and partially due to the fact that the vast majority of settlers were from the West Reserve in Manitoba.

The villages in both reserves in Saskatchewan were oriented to either a north-south or an east-west direction, with only one minor exception. The village of Blumenthal in the Rosthern Reserve was oriented slightly west of true north. The overall pattern was determined by the grid survey (see Figure 12). The Mennonites in both the Rosthern and Swift Current Reserves chose to use the survey lines as guides in the sub-division of their land into village lots and pastures. The result was that all boundary lines and roads paralleled the township and range lines.

VILLAGE FORM

The total number of named agglomerated Mennonite settlements established around the turn of the century in both of the Saskatchewan

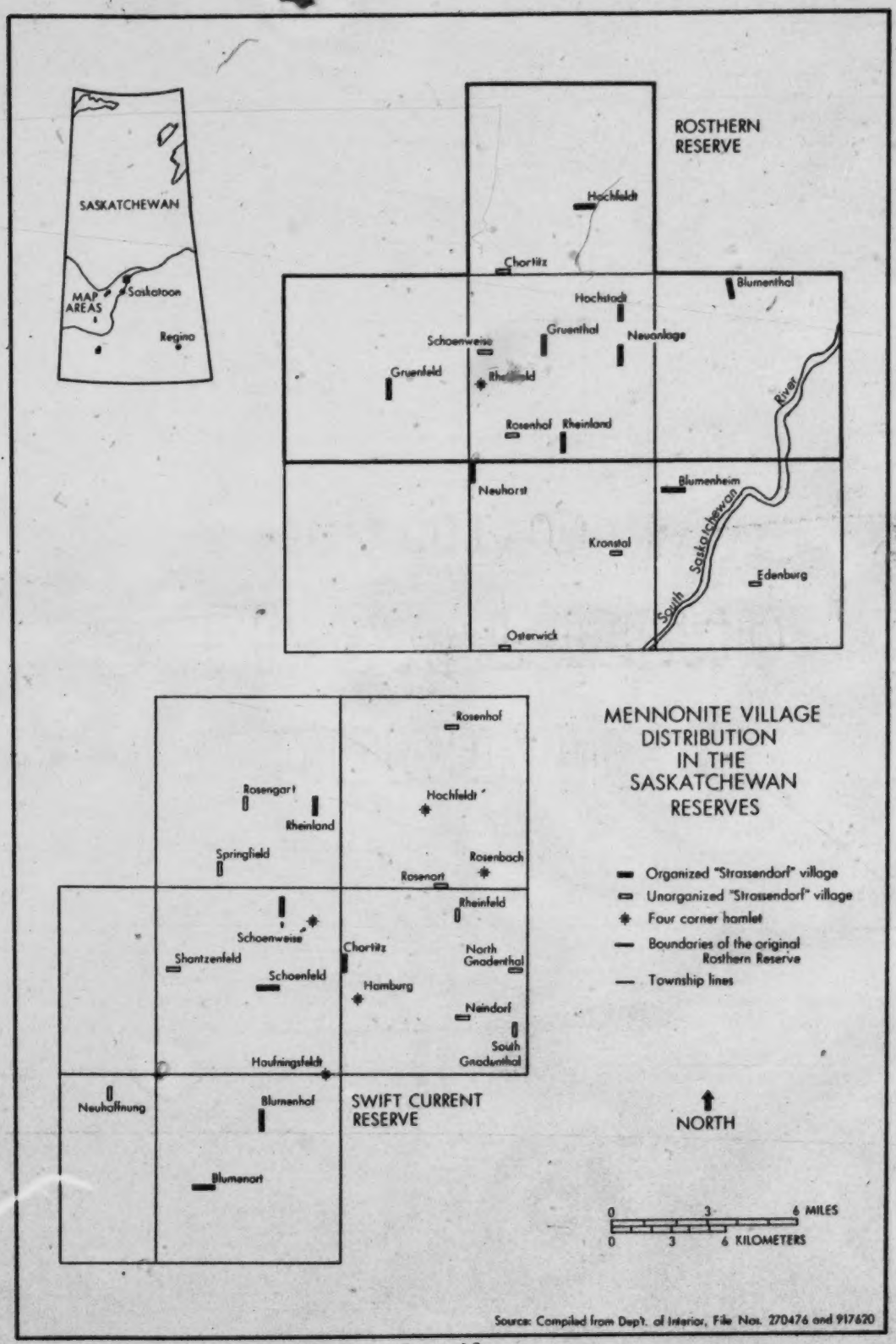

SASKATCHEWAN
MAP AREAS
Saskatoon
Regina
ROSTHERN RESERVE
Hochfeldt
Chortitz
Blumenthal
Hochstadt
Gruenthal
Neuanlage
Schoenwiese
Gruenfeld
Rheinfeld
Rosenhof
Rheinland
Neuhorst
Blumenheim
Kronstal
Edenburg
Osterwick
South Saskatchewan River
Rosenhof
Rosengart
Rheinland
Springfield
Hochfeldt
Rosenbach
Rosenort
Rheinfeld
Schoenwiese
Shantzenfeld
Schoenfeld
Chortitz
North Gnadenthal
Hamburg
Neindorf
South Gnadenthal
Hoffnungsfeldt
Neuhoffnung
Blumenhof
Blumenort
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE
MENNONITE VILLAGE DISTRIBUTION IN THE SASKATCHEWAN RESERVES
Organized "Strassendorf" village
Unorganized "Strassendorf" village
Four corner hamlet
Boundaries of the original Rosthern Reserve
Township lines
NORTH
0 3 6 MILES
0 3 6 KILOMETERS
Source: Compiled from Dept. of Interior, File Nos. 270476 and 917620

Figure 12

Reserves is fifty-two. There were thirty established in the Rosthern Reserve between 1894 and approximately 1905, and twenty-two established in the Swift Current Reserve between 1904 and 1909. These agglomerated settlements were usually given Mennonite names. It was hoped that most of them would increase in population as settlement continued, gaining the status of hamlets with elected administrations. The villages can be grouped into three types or categories according to their form and administration or lack of administration: the organized village, the unorganized village, and the four-corner hamlet.

The first category, which most closely resembles the open field village established in Manitoba, is the organized village. This settlement is characterized by its strassendorf form and the inclusion at one time of an associated common pasture. The initial group of intending Mennonite settlers selected their homesteads in close proximity to each other. Next, the land for the village was chosen to minimize travel time from farmland to village. With few exceptions, this type of village was located on the odd-numbered sections within the reserved townships. According to the Orders-in-Council granting the reserves, the Mennonites were allowed to purchase the odd-numbered sections to expand their farms (see Appendix 4). In some cases, these odd-numbered sections were subsequently subdivided into village lots and pasture land, forming an organized village.

The position of the street was decided upon and rectangular lots were laid out at right angles to and on either side of the street. Lots in the Rosthern Reserve were generally slightly over 200 feet wide and 600 feet long, while the lot size in the Swift Current Reserve was 300 feet wide by 500 to 600 feet long. The number of lots or

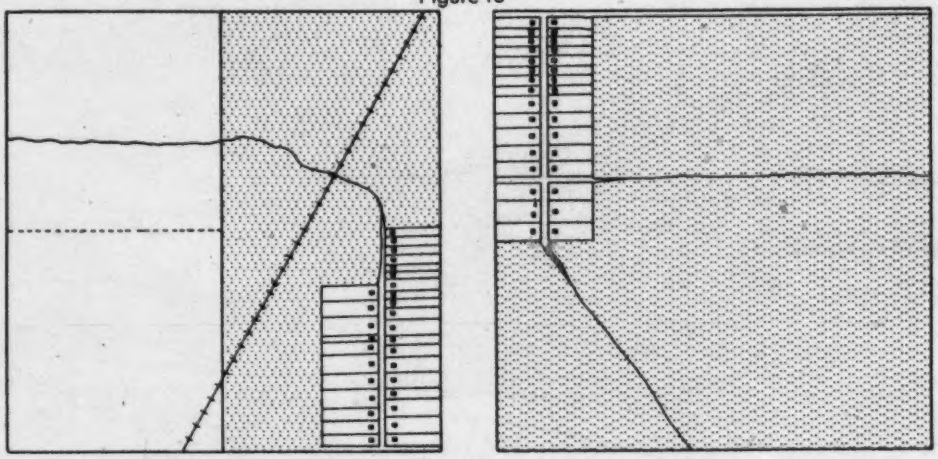
families varied with each village, but was usually from fifteen to twenty in number.

The length of the street depended on the number of families making up the village. The street was usually one-half mile or one mile long, with the buildings clustered along the central portion of the length. In most cases, the size of the village lot did not require that all the land adjacent to the village street be used for building lots to accommodate all the villagers. In this case, the land adjacent to the street could be used for the village pasture or for the accommodation of new members or an expanding village population.

The village pasture varied in size from village to village, depending on the population and its needs. In the case of Neuhorst and Neuanlage in the Rosthern Reserve, the pasture consisted of what remained of one section and one-half section respectively, after the village had been laid out (see Figure 13). In the Swift Current Reserve, the situation was similar. For example, the villages of Blumenort and Blumenhof were located on parcels of land one square mile or one section in size (see Figure 14). The village in both cases occupied a relatively narrow strip of land within the square mile while the remainder was used as common pasture.

The organized village allowed for a certain measure of division of labour. The acquisition and maintenance of livestock was an especially important factor in the early period of settlement. This resource was used as a primary source of food before commercial trading centers were established in the reserve. As a result, each farmer maintained a small herd of dairy cattle. For this reason, and because fencing material was expensive, the common pasture was not fenced, but

Figure 13

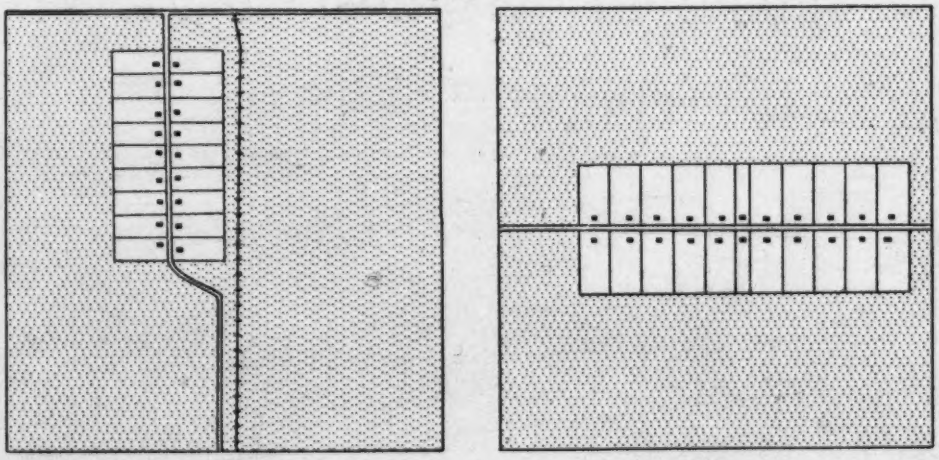


NEUANLAGE
ROSTHERN RESERVE

NEUHORST
ROSTHERN RESERVE

Village lots and residences
Roads and Streets
Railways
Common pasture

Figure 14



BLUMENHOF
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE

BLUMENORT
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE

0 1 MILES
0 1 KILOMETERS

SASKATCHEWAN
MENNONITE VILLAGE PLANS

Source: Field Data

instead the cattle were taken out each morning by a cow herd. This job was done by a hired person or was taken in turn by villagers or their children.

If the village was of sufficient size to warrant its own church, a lot near the center of the village was provided. The cemetery was usually near the church or in some corner of the common pasture. The lot provided for the church and cemetery was generally narrower than the other lots, but equally as long. As the use of this lot was limited, the unoccupied land was rented out to one villager and usually used for a hay field. The German school usually occupied the church building during the weekdays throughout the winter months, thus doing away with the necessity for a separate building.

The Mennonite villagers, upon settlement of the village site, planted trees, usually poplars (populus tremuloides) along the village street and around their individual lots. Given the lack of fences, these trees acted not only as windbreaks but also as boundary markers. As both areas originally lacked great numbers of trees, especially the Swift Current Reserve, this practice added to the attractiveness of the settlements while serving a practical function.

Land use within the individual village lots did not differ markedly in the two reserves. The characteristic connected house-and-barn, to be discussed in detail later, occupied an area close to the street and was usually surrounded by the household garden and a small grove of hardy fruit trees. The garden generally contained the basic vegetables - potatoes, corn, cabbage, beets, turnips, carrots, peas, and beans - that could be preserved for use during the winter months. Those less hardy garden items such as cucumbers, tomatoes, and melons,

were planted, but enjoyed little success during the early period. The surviving pioneers attribute this failure to the early frosts which characterized the period of settlement. The orchard generally contained hardy fruit trees such as crabapples, wild plums, wild cherries, and various berries and currants. The garden and the orchard were generally surrounded by trees for protection against the harsh effects of the wind.

The remainder of the lot served as a storage area for the farmer's machinery, feed, and grain. The necessary outbuildings occupied an area directly behind the house-barn structure, while the cattle pens and a small pasture or wheat field occupied the rear of the lot.

Land ownership in this semi-communal strassendorf type village was quite different from that in the other two types of village and from the general pattern of land ownership in the area surrounding the reserves. The land for the village was purchased by the village members in the name of the village church, or in the name of the village representatives. As the even-numbered sections were reserved for homesteading, and as the odd-numbered sections were for sale by either the Dominion or the appropriate railway company, the groups of Mennonites were forced to settle these organized villages on the odd-numbered sections. Once the village lots were laid out, the individuals chose their own lots and agreed to pay a proportionate amount of the total purchase price and thereafter, a proportionate amount of the taxes to which the village land was subject.

In the case of the village of Neuanlage, the title for the whole of Section 23, Township 40, Range 4, west of the third meridian, was issued in the name of Johann Wiebe, Bishop of the Rheinland Mennonite

Church of Manitoba,[3] on June 18, 1900, which is almost five years after the first Mennonites arrived at the site of the present village.[4]

On November 28, 1904, the title was transferred to Jacob Wiens, Bishop of the Old Colony Church of Neuanlage, owner in fee simple of the whole of Section 23. According to the title, the members of the village shared interests of varying size in the village land. The interests varied from a maximun of six sixty-fourths to a minimum of one sixty-fourth. The village lots varied in width according to the size of the interest held by the villager, which in turn determined the share of the common pasture to be used by the individual for grazing his cattle.

The system of land ownership and the village plan varied from village to village in the Rosthern Reserve, but the basic idea of group rather than individual ownership prevailed in the organized village. Thus the village land was subject to group decision and not to the individual decisions of the farmer.

The situation in the Swift Current Reserve was of a similar nature. Six of the villages were of the strassendorf plan with a common pasture and an elected administration. The villagers in each case arranged a written agreement as to their individual responsibilities to the village. Fortunately, the agreement for the village of Chortitz in the Swift Current Reserve still exists.

In the Chortitz agreement, the village land was deeded to the Mennonite Church of Chortitz and, in this case, was three-quarters of a section (see Appendix 6). Each member agreed to abide by the conditions of the agreement upon his acceptance of a lot within the village. The lots in the village of Chortitz were all the same size,

measuring approximately 300 feet in width by approximately 500 feet in length. The village was one-half mile long with lots on either side of the street (see Figure 15). Use of the village common pasture was based on a certain number of head for each village lot. These allotments could be rearranged according to the hay yield of a particular year and by mutual agreement between individuals.

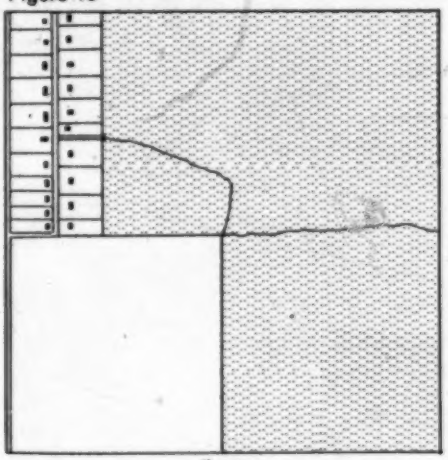
The organized village was a compromise between the communal villages of Manitoba and the individual quarter-section farmstead. The success of this arrangement will be discussed in a following chapter.

The second type of village, the unorganized village, maintained the general strassendorf plan. The lot sizes differed greatly from individual to individual, and from village to village - from a few acres to a full quarter-section. Essentially, this type of village was a grouping together of individual farmers on their own land, for some group benefit.

The largest remaining village of this kind is Rosenhof, on the northern edge of the Swift Current Reserve. Approximately eighteen farmers now live in this village (see Figure 16). As the group increased in the initial settlement period, the village increased in length and developed a short central cross-road. The farmers involved chose to subdivide seven quarter-sections into various sized lots. Each farmer built his house along the village street, which in the case of Rosenhof, ran east-west and was nearly one mile long.

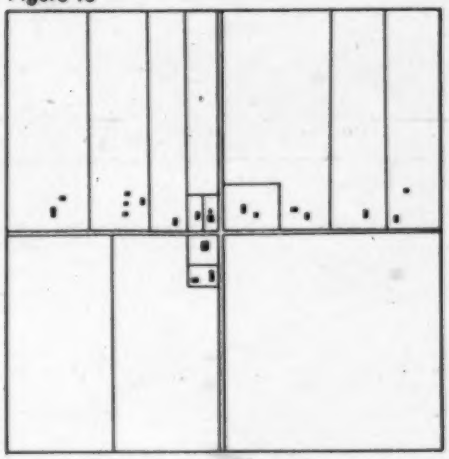
This type of village differs from the organized village in that the lots are less regular in size, the houses are not regularly spaced, the village as a whole is not as compact, and it lacks the semi-communal aspect and the elected administration. At the same

Figure 15



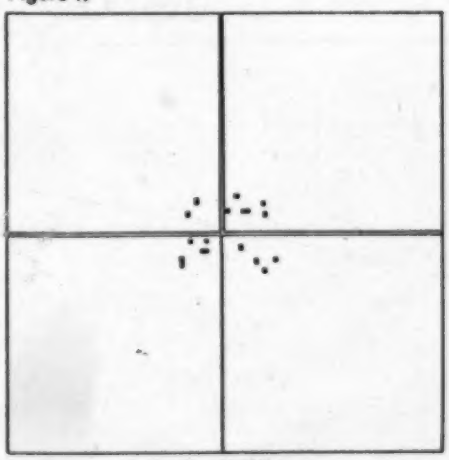
Chortitz
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE

Figure 16



Rosenfeld
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE

Figure 17



Kleine Rheinfeld
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE

# SASKATCHEWAN MENNONITE VILLAGE PLANS

- Dwellings and Buildings
- Roads and village streets
- Quarter section lines
- Common pasture

NORTH

0 ½ 1 MILES
0 1 KILOMETERS

Source: Field Data.

time, it shares with the first category the same reasons for its creation. In the initial period of settlement, it was convenient to live close to one's neighbours for mutual aid and to co-operate in the establishment of such things as a water supply and roads. In addition, the church and the German school were located central to as many farmers as possible and then often acted as an attracting force in the establishment of a nucleated settlement.

Rosenhof and the villages like it lacked the organization of the semi-communal settlement form. The farmers co-operated voluntarily without a written agreement and an elected administration. The individual held the title to his land and thus acted independently of the other villagers with regards to improvements and maintenance to his property. As was the case in the organized village, the individual usually built his house and barn connected together. The land use within the lot was similar, except where the lot size allowed for larger pasture or larger arable field functions.

In short, these villages shared a common form with the organized village but lacked the community organization and close co-operation. These unorganized villages outnumbered the organized villages. In the founding period, it was thought by their members that some of them would petition the government and become organized villages.

The third type of settlement established by the Mennonites in both reserves is not unique to the Mennonites and is a rather common phenomenon on the Western Canadian Prairies. The settlement consisted generally of three or four homesteads. Each individual built his farm yard on the corner of the homestead quarter-section nearest his neighbour. The result was what could be termed a four-corner hamlet.

The farmer maintained the title to his own land and there was no official policy of co-operation or elected administration. The Mennonites in both reserves gave names to these settlements also, and thought of them as villages, much as the larger villages. Figure 17 indicates the plan of the four-corner hamlet of Kleine Rheinfeld.

The connected house-and-barn was the usual form of dwelling, but it was not the only form of dwelling. Deviation from this tradition was more common in these four-corner hamlets. Land use within the farm yard was essentially the same as in the other two village types. The main similarity with the other village forms was the fact that they were all thought of as villages by their inhabitants and the other Mennonites of the area.

In summary, the Mennonites established three settlement types in their attempt to duplicate the social environment and cultural landscape which they enjoyed in Manitoba. The three types of settlement - the organized strassendorf village, the unorganized strassendorf village, and the four-corner hamlet - were modifications or duplications of settlement forms established in Manitoba a generation or more earlier.

## MENNONITE BUILDINGS

The architecture of the Mennonite dwelling has often been a source of debate. The fact that the dwelling place and the stable or barn were under one roof has resulted in questions about sanitation and hygiene as opposed to the convenience offered by this arrangement. An attempt will be made to outline the development of the connected house-and-barn structure to its present state in both of the study

areas.

The connected house-and-barn had been the accepted housing form among the Mennonites in the Russian settlements and was understandably transferred to the Manitoba settlements along with the rest of the Mennonites' cultural baggage. The migration of Mennonites to the Saskatchewan settlements resulted in the spread of the connected house-and-barn.

Large timber for building purposes was not as readily available in the Rosthern Reserve as it had been in the Manitoba Reserves. The Rosthern Reserve was located in Saskatchewan's parkland and thus the timber was characteristically aspen poplar (populus tremuloides) trees growing in the river bottoms and in scattered bluffs throughout the Reserve. The poplar trunks provided the building material for the initial shelters and buildings. Poplar as a building material was not very durable and thus was unsatisfactory. Log buildings were quickly replaced by frame houses and stables as the affluence of the homesteaders increased.

The initial settlers had a choice of two building styles - the connected house-and-barn or the house separate from the barn. This dichotomy was matched by a choice in the process of settlement. While many of the intending settlers chose to settle with a group, thus forming a village, a large number chose to settle on their individual quarter-section homesteads. This latter preference increased with time from the period of initial settlement. The people in the villages tended to conform to tradition and built their houses, whether they were of logs or timber, connected to the barns. On the other hand, those Mennonites who chose not to settle in this traditional method

often tended to build the houses and barns as separate units, but the connected house-and-barn was known outside the villages. Generalizing, one can state that the connected house-and-barn was the choice with few exceptions in the village, while this structure was the exception on the individual homesteads.

The initial dwelling on the individual homestead was generally of logs, although sawn lumber was used if the builder could afford it. Supplies of sawn lumber were readily available in Hague, Saskatoon, and Rosthern via the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake, and Saskatchewan Railway which ran through the Mennonite reserve. Sawn lumber and frame buildings replaced the initial log structures, and no log structures exist at the present time.

The size of the first log dwellings in the Rosthern Reserve was small in comparison to the structures that followed. Generally, the house measured about 16 to 18 feet in width and about 24 to 30 feet in length. Thatched roofs were generally associated with the log buildings, while the sawn lumber buildings were more likely to be shingled. The barn was generally of a rougher nature and almost always constructed of logs with a thatch or sod roof. The barn tended to remain in this style longer than the house. The barn was generally larger than the house, measuring 18 to 20 feet in width and over 30 feet in length.

The initial log houses in the village were constructed by various methods, depending largely on the availability of timber and the skill of the builder. The dwelling place and the stable or barn were generally contained under one ridge pole without the benefit of a connecting passageway as later became the case. The house was only

one storey high, with a simple gable end construction (see Plates 1 and 2). The floor plan was rudimentary, containing few individual rooms (see Figure 18). The method of finishing a house was common in the Mennonite dwellings in Russia and was again adopted by many of these second generation Canadian Mennonites. The walls of the house were often plastered inside and outside with a mixture of clay and straw, with the interior of the house whitewashed in addition. The Mennonites were aided in this aspect of their house building by the neighbouring Dukhobors, who were skilled in the use of clay plaster and supplied the Mennonites with some of the slackened lime for the whitewash needed for the finishing touch. The roof of the early Mennonite dwelling was generally a light frame of poplar poles covered with thatched hay, and later, straw.

The initial log and thatched connected house-and-barn was replaced with a frame connected house-and-barn as soon as the individual could afford it and as the log dwelling neared the end of its usefulness. The frame dewlling was of larger proportions, as it was slightly longer and slightly wider than its predecessor. The connected barn was generally larger as well.

Whereas in the earlier structure the house and barn were under one ridge pole, later the house and barn either had their roofs at different levels or were joined by a narrower passageway. The reason for this change was to make a more complete division of house and barn. In most cases, one end of the house faced the street and the other the barn, the roof of which was generally in line. In a few cases, the long axis of the house was oriented at right angles to that of the barn.

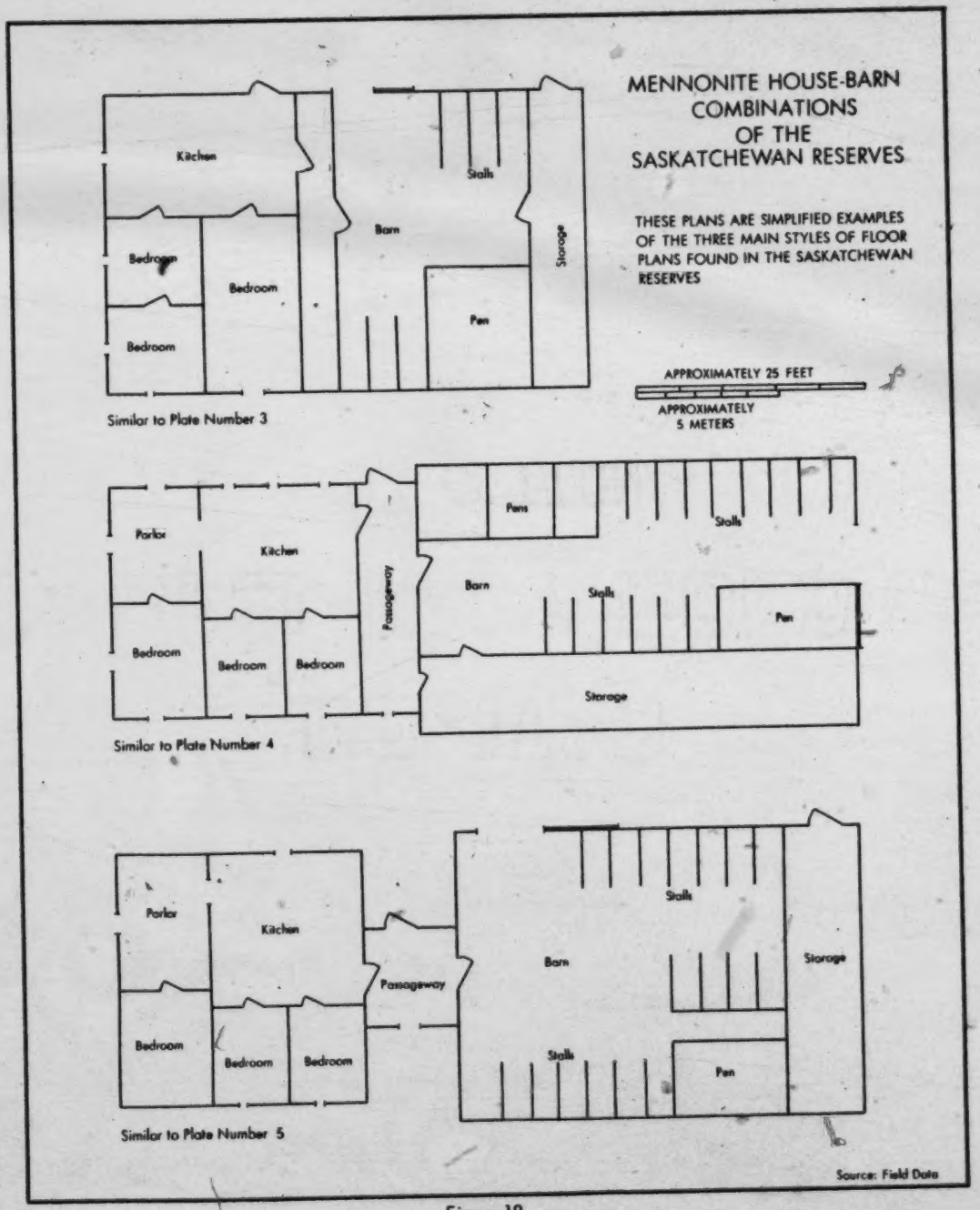

MENNONITE HOUSE-BARN COMBINATIONS OF THE SASKATCHEWAN RESERVES
THESE PLANS ARE SIMPLIFIED EXAMPLES OF THE THREE MAIN STYLES OF FLOOR PLANS FOUND IN THE SASKATCHEWAN RESERVES
APPROXIMATELY 25 FEET
APPROXIMATELY 5 METERS
Kitchen
Bedroom
Bedroom
Bedroom
Barn
Stalls
Storage
Pen
Similar to Plate Number 3
Parlor
Kitchen
Bedroom
Bedroom
Bedroom
Passageway
Pens
Stalls
Barn
Stalls
Pen
Storage
Similar to Plate Number 4
Parlor
Kitchen
Bedroom
Bedroom
Bedroom
Passageway
Stalls
Barn
Storage
Stalls
Pen
Similar to Plate Number 5
Source: Field Data

Figure 18

Plate 1. Early Mennonite log house with a thatched roof and mud plastered walls. Note the method of construction. In many cases, this type of dwelling was attached to a thatched log barn. (Source: Jacob Friesen, Hague, Saskatchewan)

Plate 2. A Mennonite house-barn combination of frame construction. The thatched roof was unusual in combination with the frame construction. Note the Mennonite family in traditional nineteenth century Mennonite garb. (Source: Jacob Friesen, Hague, Saskatchewan)

In the Swift Current Reserve, the physical environment was markedly different in one aspect. There were virtually no trees save the scrub growth around sloughs and in the coulee bottoms. The Mennonites had little choice but to build with sawn lumber, which was obtained in those early years by a two-day round trip to the lumber yards some fifteen miles to the north, in Swift Current. The building of a Canadian Pacific Railway branch line in 1912 facilitated the establishment of lumber yards at the towns of Wymark and Neville, both of which serviced the needs of the Mennonites.

The Mennonites moving to the Swift Current Reserve were financed, almost without exception, by loans from the Rheinland Mennonite Association. Nearly all the early homestead entries include a lien in the amount of $50 to $150 in favour of the above-mentioned Association. The majority of the farmers were from Manitoba where they had previously owned farms. In most cases, the proceeds from the sale of the land in Manitoba, and the loan from the Mennonite Association, aided in the establishment of these people and as a result, there are no known cases of dugout or sod shelters built on the Swift Current Reserve. This indicates that conditions of early settlement of the Swift Current Reserve were less rudimentary than those during the establishment of the Manitoba Reserves. All of the initial dwellings were frame, indicating a certain level of affluence.

In most cases, the house and barn were connected in various arrangements. In many cases, the first attempt was the construction of one building, half of which would be used as the stable, while the other half served as living quarters. The separation was a single wall, with house and barn walls in one line. The roof levels were also

in line. In this case, as the homestead developed, and as the farmer became better established, an extension was made to the building, sometimes with a passageway and sometimes without one. The original building was usually converted to use as the barn, while the extension was used as the house. This process of evolution met the needs for shelter in the early years while at the same time minimizing the cost in the homesteading period.

Equally as common was the frame house and barn built in line under one ridge pole. The house and barn were of the same width, with the length of the barn slightly longer than the house. In this case, the house and barn were separated by a hallway running across the width of the structure between the house portion and the barn. For people, the entrance to the house and barn was gained via this hallway, while entrance to the barn, for animals and machinery, was gained through larger double doors at the end or side of the barn.

A refinement to this plan, which was common in Manitoba and later in the Rosthern area, was the separation of the house and barn by a narrow passageway or porch. The function of the two buildings remained the same while their size in proportion to each other changed slightly. The barn could be, and often was, made wider than the house without affecting the overall design of the house (see Figure 18 for details of various plans).

The reasons for building the house and barn together have been discussed by other writers, but nontheless bear review here. Perhaps the primary advantage is the convenience offer d in caring for live-stock in the very cold prairie winters. The connection of house and barn also offered economic advantages in that it allowed the farmer

to save the cost of lumber for one wall. In the initial pioneering period, this would have been a significant factor. The argument loses ground in later years as the Mennonites remodelled or abandoned the first structures in favour of new buildings, which in many cases were built after the fashion of the connected house-and-barn. In Plans 2 and 3 in Figure 18, there is no real saving in lumber, as the house and barn are separated in both cases by a hallway or a passageway. The convenience factor remains, but is probably outweighed by tradition, and a desire to do things the way they had always been done.

The main disadvantage of this structure was the constant danger of fire. Fire in either portion usually meant the loss of both living quarters and barn. This was especially dangerous in the Rosthern Reserve, where the roofs were thatched. There were also hygienic dangers in those houses where sanitation was poor. In the majority of cases, sanitation was meticulous and one hears of only the occasional exception. Despite the cleanliness, little could be done about the annoying odours as the building settled with age. With a change in the attitudes of the young people, and the change in expected sanitation requirements, the above-mentioned disadvantages weighed heavily in favour of the separation of barn and house.

A good many of the structures remain in the surviving villages in the connected state. Many of them are in a good state of repair, but the barn portion now generally serves as a storage shed or workshop rather than for the housing of livestock. Today, one encounters two opinions on the subject of abandonment of the connected house-and-barn. In the majority of cases, preference is for them to be torn down, while in the odd case, there is a desire to preserve them as an

Plate 3. Mennonite house-barn combination under one ridge pole, in the village of Chortitz in the Swift Current Reserve. The porch obscures the windows of the house while the chimney marks the approximate limits of the living quarters (see Plate 5).

Plate 4. Mennonite house-barn combination, in the village of Hochfeldt in the Rosthern Reserve. Note difference in roof levels of house and barn. A passageway generally separated house and barn, as in Plan 2 of Figure 18.

Plate 5. Mennonite house-barn combination with linear connecting passage between house and barn. Located in the village of Chortitz in the Swift Current Reserve. Note house-type windows in the barn section, indicating a later addition of the house.

historic architectural form.

The settlement of the Saskatchewan Mennonite Reserves was effected in the traditional method. Co-operative agricultural villages were established which were physically similar to those in Manitoba. There were only slight differences in form, but major differences in landholding, which will be discussed in the next chapter. In addition, the desire to maintain the traditional housing style was evidently strong in the early period, weakening over time to allow abandonment and modification of the traditional connected house-and-barn.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## FOOTNOTES

[1]J. H. Richards and K. I. Fung (eds.), Atlas of Saskatchewan, (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1969), pp. 40 - 78.
A degree-day is one day at one degree over 42 F.

[2]Ibid.

[3]The Rheinland Mennonite Church of Manitoba was termed the Old Colony Church by the Manitoba Mennonites, and was comprised of the Furstenland faction of the Manitoba Mennonites. The Old Colony Church in the village of Neuanlage shared the same ultra-conservative views while being made up of mostly the Sommerfeld Mennonites.

[4]The establishment of a village was a slow process as all of the potential members did not necessarily arrive at the same time. The title to the village of Neuanlage contained twenty names, each of whom shared in the ownership of that land to a greater or lesser extent. The first families settled on the site in 1895, but as the title date indicates, the settlement was not complete until 1900. Neuanlage continued to grow and by 1905, had thirty-two members living on the original street, which was extended to the north, adding lots on the east side of the street only, or adjacent to the sectional road allowance running along the eastern edge of the village.

# CHAPTER SIX

## RECENT CHANGES AND CONCLUSIONS

### CHANGE IN SETTLEMENT FORM

The establishment of the Saskatchewan daughter colonies was an attempt to maintain a way of life. As we have noted previously, the situation in the Manitoba Reserves at the time of the migration to Saskatchewan in 1894 and again in 1904, was not conducive to the establishment of new villages, nor to the continuance of those already established. This was due, in part, to the growing desire on the part of the more progressively-minded Mennonites to participate in the commercial grain economy, and partially to the insecurity of land tenure within the village settlement. In view of the fact that the settlement form was being abandoned in Manitoba, one might question why it was being re-established in the new reserve near Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

It is known that the open field economy was established in the Rosthern area in 1894[1] in a slightly modified form from that known in Manitoba, but failed to last for some of the same reasons it was abandoned in the Manitoba Reserves. First, the narrow fields were unsuitable for the commercial grain economy, restricting the freedom of expansion by individual farmers. Second, the open field system as

established in the village of Neuanlage in the Rosthern Reserve, required a high degree of co-operation, without which the system would not work. The village land was purchased by and titled to the village, but the open fields were made up by dividing the individually-owned quarter-section homesteads. The failure of the system lay in a lack of co-operation by one or more villagers. Legally, the homestead belonged to the individual homesteader. Thus he could withdraw his land from the open field system without fear of legal repercussions. This was exactly what happened to disrupt the open field system in the village of Neuanlage.

The system in the Rosthern Reserve was only slightly less fragile than it had been in Manitoba. In Manitoba, the village site, the common pasture, and the land for the open field system were all separately owned by the individual homesteaders and were pooled voluntarily to form the village. This uncertain arrangmeent meant that the withdrawal of one quarter-section often started a chain reaction of withdrawal that destroyed the open field system and often the village as well.

A change in the landholding policy in the Mennonite villages of the Rosthern Reserve did little to safeguard the co-operative cultivation or open field aspect of the Mennonite settlements, but it did manage to preserve the actual village form and the associated common pasture from disruption. This was done by a separate or group title for the village land. Therefore, no one individual decision could result in the loss or abandonment of the village site as it could in Manitoba.

The situation in the Swift Current Reserve was different again.

In this reserve, there was no attempt to recreate the open field economy, although the nucleated agricultural settlement was recreated. The land for the village was purchased by the group in the name of the village, church, or elected representatives. In the organized village, this village land included a common pasture as it had in similar villages in the Rosthern Reserve. As the village land was held by the group, it was subject to majority rule. The decision of an individual to opt out of the communal responsibilities of the village had little or no effect on the village form. At worst, such action would leave a vacant lot which in turn could raise the tax load of each villager proportionately, if the vacant lot was left unoccupied.

In Manitoba, the villages were almost always patterned after the village form known in Russia. This meant that the village took on the strassendorf plan and the associated open field economy. As we have seen, the essential portions of this plan were transferred to Saskatchewan, so in effect when the open field system was abandoned, the actual settlement form in Saskatchewan differed very little in physical form to that known in Russia and Manitoba.

Apart from the above re-creation, there was one other linear village form as discussed in Chapter Five. This form effectively did away with the group land-ownership, and thus did away with the danger of any disruption of the individual's living space. This settlement type was a modification of the strassendorf plan. As each farmer owned his farm yard or village lot outright, and as he had no obligation to his neighbours, save what he offered voluntarily, there was less chance for the break-up of the village form and its subsequent abandonment.

The reason for modifications in land-ownership and form are three-

fold. First, there was a strong desire among the migrating Mennonites to preserve the village form and its associated social and religious connotations while safeguarding it from disruption. Second, there was a strong desire to live close to one's neighbours, thus maximizing the benefit from this situation. Third, there were outside influences, chief among which was the government action of 1885 disallowing the establishment of new villages in the Manitoba Reserves.

One might also ask why the Mennonites did not secure the land used for the open field system in the initial Rosthern settlements in the same way that they had secured the land for the village site. The answer is contained in the Dominion Lands Act, in which the homestead regulations were specific about the requirements that land ownership be on an individual basis. The land (one quarter-section) had to be filed on by an individual, who then had a number of years to carry out the necessary improvements with regards to shelter and plowed acreage. The regulations requiring that the homesteader be resident upon the homestead for three years were waived in the case of the Mennonites, who could take up residence in the Mennonite hamlets. On the other hand, there was no provision in the Dominion Lands Act which would allow group ownership of a number of quarter-sections other than a voluntary pooling of the land, which had previously proved unsuccessful. In addition, the Mennonites, having become accustomed to the vastness of the Canadian West and the growing commercial grain economy, had little inclination to maintain the somewhat restrictive peasant economy associated with the open field system of cultivation.

The government regulations acted as an additional external force to discourage the wholesale transference of the Manitoba-type settle-

ments with the associated open field system. An Order-in-Council of May 6, 1885, prohibited the establishment of any more villages in the West Reserve in Manitoba. This move was apparently unnecessary as forces from within the Mennonite group were encouraging abandonment of the village system as a technique of occupying the land.[2] It should be noted, however, that the settlement technique being abandoned was the open field system and not the concept of a village or hamlet type of settlement in itself.

The disallowance of the establishment of new villages in Manitoba undoubtedly had the effect of encouraging progressively-minded Mennonite farmers to take up residence on their own quarter-section homesteads. Many of these farmers, or their sons, were included in the groups moving into the Rosthern Reserve almost ten years later, and in all likelihood, would not settle in a village after having once abandoned that form of settlement. It is impossible to measure the effect of the government action on Mennonite attitudes toward the choice of settlement types, but it can be safely assumed that the legislation would have increased the trend to the individual dispersed settlement pattern.

An alternative option to the individual or dispersed settlement pattern was contained in the "Hamlet Clause" of the Dominions Land Act. The Hamlet Clause allowed for the establishment of villages or hamlets by a group of at least twenty families of intending settlers upon the presentation of a petition to that effect to the Minister of the Interior.[3]

This Clause 37 of the Dominion Lands Act was actually the basis for the village settlements of the Saskatchewan Reserves. It was mentioned earlier that most of the agglomerated settlements established

by the Mennonites in the Saskatchewan Reserves shared a common goal at the time of initial settlement, which was growth to twenty or more families and thus official status as a hamlet. Those that achieved that goal and petitioned the government are termed "organized villages" while those that did not are termed "unorganized villages". The four-corner hamlets constitute essentially a separate category. In some of them, the plan was to become a village as settlement increased, while in other of these clustered settlements, there was no such aspiration.

Given that the primary purpose of the Mennonite village settlements was to preserve a social environment suitable for the preservation of the Mennonite religion, one measure of the success achieved can be made by examining the survival rate of the original villages. In the Rosthern Reserve, only seven of the original thirty-two possible village sites have developed and maintained the strassendorf plan. In the Swift Current Reserve, the situation is only scarcely brighter. Of the twenty-one original village possibilities, only eight have developed and maintained the original strassendorf form. There are a number of reasons for the disappearance or failure of the Mennonite villages that are general in nature, applying to all of the villages.[4]

According to the Hamlet Clause, each village required a minimum number of members. In most villages, only a fraction of the required number actually arrived to choose the village location in the initial settlement period. The village, or rather the initial cluster of farmsteads, was named, and as the numbers increased, the village form was laid out. It was hoped that new arrivals over the course of time would make up the number required by the government to exempt the

villagers from the residence requirements of the Dominion Lands Act. In many cases, this did not occur and the village site was abandoned altogether[5] or the site failed to become what was earlier termed an organized village.

The abandonment of farmsteads in the villages over time resulted in the disappearance of some potential villages. This occurrence had little effect on the organized villages as the out-movement of the individual farmer usually left an empty lot which could be absorbed by one of the remaining farmers or occupied by a new villager. In the case of the unorganized villages, the out-movement of individual farmers usually had the effect of obscuring the strassendorf plan and generally increasing the distance between houses in the village street. In some cases, this process left only one or two farmers in a village.

This latter process is just now nearing completion in the former unorganized village of Rosengart in the Swift Current Reserve. The one remaining farmer has, just this last year, purchased the other two remaining farmsteads and the connected house-and-barn structures will be torn down. The end result will, without doubt, be a single farmstead on a former village site. Therefore, the village form will disappear as it has in other cases. The village name has already begun to fall into disuse in favour of the farmer's name.

Lastly, some of the organized villages were subject to stress at the time of the abandonment of the open field system in the Rosthern Reserve. As this practise was short-lived and as it is uncertain how many villages actually practised the open field system of cultivation little more can be said as to the results on village survival.

To this point, only small scale or individual out-movements have

been discussed. These usually resulted from dissatisfaction with some aspect of village life, or from a desire to relocate in a different area. Out-movements of the type described above seldom resulted in a rapid abandonment of a particular village. However, during the early 1920's, a relatively large scale out-movement took place, resulting in drastic changes in the settlements of both reserves, because of the loss of the conservative element and thus the loss of a good deal of support for the traditional settlement form. The out-movement resulted from a disagreement between the Western Canadian Mennonites and the respective provincial governments over the question of the use of the German language in the education of Mennonite children. This movement affected the Manitoba Reserves as well as the two reserves in Saskatchewan, although the latter are of primary concern here.[6]

The settlements in Saskatchewan were established when the area was still under federal jurisdiction (Saskatchewan became a province in 1905). One result of this circumstance was that the Mennonites were able to establish their own type of education system under an agreement made between their predecessors in Manitoba and the federal government in 1872. The Mennonite education system consisted of a private school in each of the villages, run by the villagers themselves. In 1915, there were seventeen such schools in the Rosthern Reserve and fifteen in the Swift Current Reserve.[7] These private schools offered basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as a generous measure of Mennonite religious principles, to the Mennonite children of the reserves. All of the education was carried out in Hoch Deutsch or High German.

Previous to the events in Saskatchewan, the Manitoba government passed the Public Schools Act which required the private schools of

that province, including those in the Mennonite Reserves, to meet certain standards set by the provincial authorities. Schools failing or refusing to meet the requirements were to be taken over by the province as public schools. The conservative Mennonites in Manitoba saw this legislation as an attack on their culture as it required that English be the main language of instruction. The Mennonites considered the German language essential to the survival of the Mennonite religion and culture. The loss of it would mean an encroachment by "worldly" aspirations and loss of group solidarity. The eventual outcome of this clash between the conservative Mennonites and the provincial authority was a mass migration of Mennonites to Mexico. Nearly all the seven thousand migrants came from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, whose total Mennonite population was 41,839 in 1921.

The course of events was nearly identical in Saskatchewan. The Old Colony and Sommerfeld Mennonites in Saskatchewan thought that loss of the German language could not be tolerated. In Saskatchewan, the conservative Mennonites countered the public school system of the province by refusing to send their children to the public schools. The Saskatchewan government duplicated the move by the Manitoba government and passed the Public School Attendance Act in 1916, which required that school age children attend the public school, or their respective parents would face fines and possible imprisonment.

The opposition to the Saskatchewan legislation was confined to the conservative Mennonites or those loosely termed "Old Colony" Mennonites. Geographically, this opposition was centered in the villages of the Rosthern and Swift Current Reserves. This situation was paralleled in Manitoba where the conservative Old Colony and

Sommerfelder resisted, while the "reformed" sects like the Bergthal generally favoured acceptance of the public schools.

A contemporary report from Saskatchewan indicates that the educational standards in the colonies were inadequate, buildings were unsanitary, poorly ventilated, and generally poorly equipped to educate children. The teacher was poorly trained and of questionable capability to administer the meager educational fare offered by the Mennonite private schools.[8]

This assessment was shared by some members of the dissenting Mennonite groups. Often it was agreed that children could obtain better instruction at the public school as opposed to the private school. The public school offered a qualified teacher and a more demanding curriculum while the teacher in the private school could usually teach only what he himself had acquired at the private school. The problem faced by the government was to standardize teacher qualifications and educational instruction in the English language.

On the other hand, the Mennonites viewed the problem from a very different perspective. The opposition from the Mennonites was based on loss of the German language rather than opposition to the higher standard of education offered by the public school. The gravity of the problem was expressed by E. H. Oliver as follows:

> "The problem that confronts us is one that involves almost the dearest possession of a man's life, his language; and, I fear, the question is not entirely free from religious associations..."[9]

The final outcome of this disagreement between the government and the conservative Mennonites of Manitoba and Saskatchewan was a repetition of the events which forced the first Mennonites out of Russia.

As in the past, when the Mennonites had been faced with an unbearable situation, they revived the age-old solution of migration to a new land. Several possibilities were explored, including the province of Quebec, the southern United States, various countries in South America, and Mexico. Further investigation proved that the Mexican government would be willing to grant the necessary concessions. Thus Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan moved to North Central Mexico throughout the 1920's, in order to save their language and religion.

The Mennonites concerned in this migration were led by Bishop Wienz of the village of Neuanlage in the Rosthern Reserve, and Bishop Wiebe of the village of Springfeld in the Swift Current Reserve. Defiance of the legislation by these men and their congregations led to fines and imprisonment. By April of 1918, fifty prosecutions had been levied in the Rosthern Reserve. Another fourteen persons were prosecuted on May 30, electing a prison term rather than submit to the fines.[10]

The situation in the Swift Current Reserve was much the same as that described above. The conservative Mennonites considered themselves martyrs for their cause and would rather endure the punishment than abandon their private schools and the German language. The result of this action was continued fines. There are isolated cases where the continued fines impoverished the dissident farmers, who were eventually forced to serve jail sentences.

As mentioned previously, the decision was made to migrate to Mexico. The initial movements occurred in 1922. On March 9, two hundred and fifty people in twenty-three freight cars and four passenger cars left on a special train from the Rosthern area, while a

week later, three hundred more left on a special train from Hague, both trains heading for land in the province of Chihuahua in Mexico.[11]

On March 9, 1922, a group of four hundred left Swift Current, followed on March 22 by a group of two hundred more disgruntled Mennonites. The movement continued, and on November 17, 1922, four hundred left from the villages south of Swift Current, while on December 12, 1922, a group of two hundred of more progressive Mennonites left from the Herbert area. The spring of 1923 saw more Mennonites readying for the move to Mexico. Subsequent movements continued until the late 1920's and sporadic group colonization efforts continued to World War II, aimed at various countries of South and Central America.

The movement of Mennonites out of the two reserves in Saskatchewan resulted in a major disruption in the settlement plan. A rift occurred between the conservative Mennonites willing to migrate and those who were set on staying in Saskatchewan. The group intent on migration looked with disapproval on those who were willing to compromise their religious principles to retain their farms in Saskatchewan.

The period preceeding the clash over the Public Schools Attendance Act was considered by Mennonites who lived through the period as the "golden age" of the Saskatchewan settlements. The Reserves were fully occupied, the farmers had become well-established, and the village communities were at the zenith of their development. According to accounts of contemporaries, one can picture neat, well-treed village streets lined with substantial connected house-and-barn units.[12] The Mennonites of the organized villages enjoyed a well-established co-operative social structure until the migration disrupted the situation.

Of the seven thousand Mennonite emigrants to Mexico before World

War II, all but a few hundred were from Canada. Some Mennonites were from the two Saskatchewan Reserves, but the majority were from the more populous Manitoba settlements. Many of the migrants left as part of large groups as indicated previously, but there were smaller groups as well, as some Mennonites banded together in groups of only two or three families and made their way to the new "promised land" in Mexico by automobile or truck, taking only those possessions they could carry with them.

It is estimated that over half of the population of each of the larger villages left the Saskatchewan Reserves for Mexico. One must remember that for the most part, these were the most conservative of the Mennonites, and thus objected more strongly to the potential loss of the German language schools.[13] It is by way of this reasoning that one can accept the assumption that the "village Mennonites" would have been in the front ranks of those moving to Mexico. Thus the loss of the conservative faction represented a loss of support for the village way of life.

The effect of this migration on the village structure is difficult to measure for two reasons. The first is because of the influx of new emigrants from the Mennonite settlements in the U.S.S.R. after the Russian Revolution during the mid-1920's. The second is because the Mennonites remaining were for the most part responsible for the purchase of land vacated by the migrating Mennonites. These two factors tended to reduce the impact and visual effect of the out-movement from the villages.

The disappearance of the village of Schoenweise in the Swift Current Reserve is directly attributed to the 1920 migration, as all the residents left Canada. The village of Hochfeld in the Rosthern Reserve was once the home of more than four hundred persons; it now contains two farmsteads and no recognizeable village plan or village

organization. The disappearance of this village and the reduction in size of the other major villages in both reserves is attributed to the out-migration of the 1920's.

Generally, the form of the organized villages tended to survive better than in the unorganized villages. The organized villages were better able to deal with the loss of population because the vacated lot could remain empty until such a time as a suitable resident was found.[14] In the unorganized village, once the village lot or farmstead was sold, it generally meant the formation of a gap in the village plan, especially when the purchaser decided not to relocate his own farmstead in the vacant lot. The four-corner hamlets suffered the same fate. Reduction of population in these two latter settlement forms, if extensive, resulted in the obscuring of the original settlement plan, and in the extreme case, the loss of the location and name of the former settlement.

The most recent change occurring in the Mennonite villages concerns the organized villages and their associated common pastures. As has been previously noted, the inhabitants did not enjoy legal title to their share of the village land, but instead held an interest, for an unspecified area of the village land, in conjunction with their fellow villagers. This interest allowed them to live on a certain-sized plot of land, and allowed them a certain share in the common pasture. Since the mid-1960's, there has been a movement by these villagers to seek legal title to their share of the village land. As a result of this desire, the organized villages and their associated common pastures are being surveyed and divided into areas representative of the individual's share or interest in the village. As a result,

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each villager receives a legal description and a legal title to his land in the village.

This change in landholding procedure is quite extensive, as there are only two villages, Neuanlage in the Rosthern Reserve and Chortitz in the Swift Current Reserve, operating under their original agreements (see Appendix 6). These villages are considering legal subdivision of their land, too. The resultant subdivisions form unusual patterns on the Saskatchewan landscape, not unlike the French and Metis long lot settlements. The village of Blumenort is perhaps the most unusual in that the lots radiate from the linear village streets (see Figure 19).

The plans of these hamlets are registered with the Land Titles Office as "town plans" of their respective villages. In this manner, the Mennonite villager receives legal recognition of his ownership of the land he occupies without disrupting the basic strassendorf form of the village.

There is little doubt that the change described above will add a degree of permanence to the organized villages. The villages seldom have any commercial function, and are simply farm-operator villages. In most cases, the village assembly continues to meet to decide on the maintenance of the village infrastructure. Perhaps indicative of the future is the consideration by the village of Schoenfeld to add street lights and a hard surface to their village street.

## CONCLUSION

The Mennonites who migrated to Canada in 1872 are an ethnic group of considerable interest to the geographer. This study has focused in

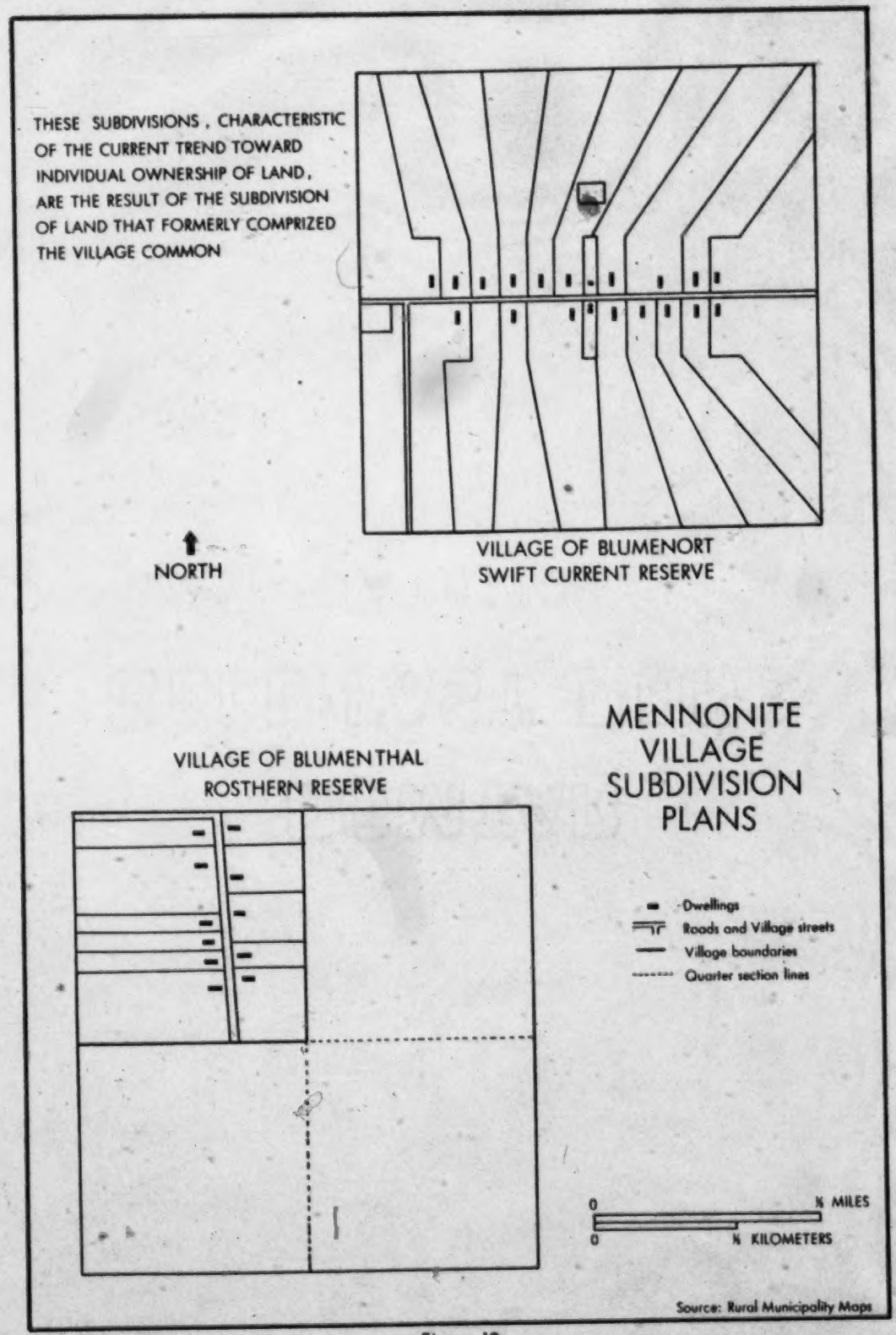
THESE SUBDIVISIONS, CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CURRENT TREND TOWARD INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP OF LAND, ARE THE RESULT OF THE SUBDIVISION OF LAND THAT FORMERLY COMPRIZED THE VILLAGE COMMON
NORTH
VILLAGE OF BLUMENORT
SWIFT CURRENT RESERVE
VILLAGE OF BLUMENTHAL
ROSTHERN RESERVE
MENNONITE VILLAGE SUBDIVISION PLANS
Dwellings
Roads and Village streets
Village boundaries
Quarter section lines
0
½ MILES
0
½ KILOMETERS
Source: Rural Municipality Maps

Figure 19

particular on the characteristic arrangement of the Mennonite's living space. One can qualify this objective, excluding all but one element of the larger Mennonite group. The group of interest was described earlier as the conservative element of the Mennonites, represented by the Old Colony (Furstenland) and Sommerfeld church groups.

From their origin in the Low Countries of Northeast Europe, the Mennonites migrated en masse to the steppes of Southern Russia where the traditional linear communal settlements were re-created. Subsequent changes occurred in this settlement form due to the influence of the Russian Colonial Law and, to a lesser degree, because of other factors in the Russian landscape.

Subsequent migration to Canada resulted in the establishment of the same settlement form in southern Manitoba. The physical environment of southern Manitoba proved similar in many ways to the southern Russian landscape and as the Mennonites were willing to live as they had in Russia, they re-created the strassendorf village and open field economy.

The system, as it was transferred from Russia, was incapable of adjusting to or competing with the commercial grain economy encountered in Canada by the Mennonites. This incapability ultimately resulted in the destruction of the open field economy and the majority of the strassendorf villages.

Expansion of the populations in the original colonies in the Manitoba Reserves resulted in the formation of the Rosthern and Swift Current Reserves in Saskatchewan in 1894 and 1906 respectively. An attempt was made in the Rosthern Reserve to re-create the open field

strassendorf villages that were failing in the Manitoba Reserves. During the transfer of the settlement system to Saskatchewan, a change was effected to ensure survival of the village form. The village land was purchased by a group of Mennonites who then deeded the land to a representative of the group or to the respective church, rather than leaving it to individual ownership. Subsequent establishment of the Swift Current Reserve saw no attempt to use the open field system, but the group or church ownership of the village land was maintained in what was termed the organized village.

The re-establishment of a particular form and the changes observed were the result of a number of factors. One was the federal government restrictions on the formation of villages, as expressed in Clause 37 of the Dominion Lands Act. Second was a desire on the part of the Mennonites to preserve an interesting and convenient way of life, which resulted in the change in the method of land ownership. Third was the desire to live in close proximity to one's pioneer neighbours and thus to benefit from the social implications of the situation.

The latter two aims were supported through the establishment, by the Mennonites, of the unorganized village and the four-corner hamlet. These two settlement forms were the result of a desire for convenience in the establishment of the infra-structure and the provision of community services.

In establishing the villages of the Saskatchewan Reserves, the Mennonites built in the traditional style. The connected house-and-barn was initially constructed of logs and thatch in the Rosthern Reserve, and of sawn lumber and frame construction in the Swift Current Reserve. An increase in affluence and a desire to increase sanitation

resulted in the separation of house and barn by a passageway and eventually total separation of house and barn.

Finally, one can conclude that the traditional Mennonite settlement pattern and house form transferred from Russia to Manitoba could not survive the strongly competitive and expansionistic commercial grain industry encountered on the Canadian Prairies. This proved the case in the Manitoba Reserves and again in the Rosthern Reserve. By the time the Swift Current Reserve was established, there was no longer any attempt made to re-establish the traditional semi-communal village and open field system.

Subsequent modifications in landholding methods resulted in survival of the linear village form, although the functions are not the same as the original Manitoba villages. The survival rate of Mennonite villages in the Saskatchewan Reserves is higher than that of the villages of the mother colony in Manitoba. This is attributable to the change in landholding. The most recent trend observed in the organized village can only have a positive effect on the survival of the remnant of a medieval settlement form. Rural depopulation and farm size expansion will no doubt also play an important role in the village survival, but only the passage of time will determine their effect on the new village organization.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FOOTNOTES

[1]Based on interviews conducted during the course of field research. A collection of some of these tapes are held by the Saskatchewan Archives Board, under the "Towards a New Past" Program, Saskatchewan Archives, Regina, Saskatchewan.

[2]John Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements of Southern Manitoba," Geographic Review, XLIX, 3 (1959), p. 361.

[3]The Revised Statutes of Canada. Volume 1, "The Dominion Lands Act," 46 V., c. 17, s. 1, part., Chapter 54, Clause 37, p. 829.

[4]During the course of the field research for this study, an attempt was made to locate as many of the original village sites in both Reserves as was possible. It was found that in the Rosthern Reserve, there were thirty-one village sites, the names of which are listed below. All but two of the settlements bear names that are clearly of Mennonite origin. The settlements of Lake Park and New Home are anomalies and may in fact be the English equivalents of former Mennonite names. A total of sixteen of the Rosthern village sites could be located while fifteen could not. A small number of the names of these latter villages still appear on the maps as school locations, but were apparently once names of groups of farmers.

| Located Rosthern Villages: | Unlocated Rosthern Villages: |
|---|---|
| 1. Gruenfeld | 1. Steinreich |
| 2. Schoenweise | 2. Lake Park |
| 3. Gruenthal | 3. Edinburg |
| 4. Rheinland | 4. Schmitsburg |
| 5. Newhorst | 5. Silberfeld |
| 6. Blumenthal | 6. Halbstatt |
| 7. Hochstadt | 7. Schoenthal |
| 8. Neuanlage | 8. Blumenfeld |
| 9. Blumenhiem | 9. Blumenort |
| 10. Chortitz | 10. Hoffnungsort |
| 11. Kronstal | 11. Steinbach |
| 12. Rosenfeld | 12. New Home |
| 13. Osterwich | 13. Neuhoffnung |
| 14. Hochfeld | 14. Rosengart |
| 15. Olgafeld | 15. Rosenbach |
| 16. Rheinfeld | |

[5]As the potential village sites were abandoned, the name fell into disuse. Furthermore, this process is still occurring as the village sites are abandoned.

[6]E. K. Francis, "Manitoba School Problem in Manitoba - 1874-1919," Mennonite Quarterly Review, XXVII, 3 (1953), p. 210.

[7]Edmund H. Oliver, "The Country School in Non-English Speaking Communities in Saskatchewan," an address delivered before the Saskatchewan Public Education League in Regina on September 22, 1915.

[8]Ibid., pp. 7 - 9.

[9]Ibid., p. 6.

[10]Regina Leader Post, May 30, 1918.

[11]Swift Current Sun, March 9, 1922.

[12]"The Mennonite villages are a picture of delight and abundance of foliage, and fruit blossoms, for the Mennonites are very successful at growing such small fruits as cherries and currants. Their flower gardens are very promising, but it is yet too early for them to make much of a vegetable showing as they sow their garden seeds late. A drive through the villages from now on through the summer will be a panorama of excellent gardens and healthy and rather good-looking children." Swift Current Sun, June 22, 1922.

[13]Based on discussions with Mennonites who lived through the period in question, and are now resident in surviving villages.

[14]Any new resident of an organized village had to be approved by the village assembly before he could take up residence within the village.

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The Saskatchewan Archives Board holds a number of collections related directly to the Mennonite Reserves. The collected personal papers of W. R. Motherwell, S. J. Latta, W. M. Martin, C. A. Dunning, and Campbell Innes deal with various events and conditions of interest to the study. The Department of Agriculture, Farm Labour Division, file number V. 4, deals with the conditions surrounding the influx of Mennonites from Russia in the 1920's. The Saskatchewan Commission of Inquiry into practises of the "Old Colony" Mennonite Church and

the Executive Council Office newspaper clipping file deals in detail with educational matters in the Mennonite communities in the early 1900's in the Rosthern Reserve. Finally, the reports and correspondence of various Dominion Lands Personnel, namely C. F. Miles, P. J. McGarry, and Thomas Turnbull, contain much valuable information about the early landscape and the Mennonite communities of the early settlement period.

The Manitoba Provincial Archives contain relevent material. The research notes and manuscript of E. K. Francis' book, In Search of Utopia, are housed in these archives. These files contain much material, including many unpublished details of individual Manitoba Mennonite villages.

The above is only a small portion of material about Mennonites, but it proved the most valuable to this particular study.

The second section of primary source material are the personal interviews conducted by the writer in the course of research for this study. A selected number of these interviews were taped, indexed, and deposited in the "Towards a New Past" collection in the Saskatchewan Archives in Regina. The tapes are as follows:

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APPENDIX 1.

RUSSIAN COLONIAL LAW

The Russian Colonial Law and its ten articles summarized below formed the basis of Mennonite settlement in the Ukraine. Furthermore, the first, sixth, and eighth articles were repeated in subsequent submissions by migrating Mennonites to the national governments of their host countries.

1. Freedom of religion and exemption from taking oath.
2. A homestead of 65 "dessiatines" per family (a dessiatine= 2.7 acres).
3. Freedom of enterprise.
4. Special rights to manufacture beer, vinegar, and brandy.
5. A monopoly of the retail trade in alcoholic beverages within the colonies.
6. Perpetual exemption from military and civil service.
7. Exemption from the extended quartering of soldiers and from the corvée; the duty to keep bridges and roads in repair.
8. Full rights in property; right to implementation of own inheritance regulations and management of the estates of orphans.
9. Ten to fifteen years free from taxes, after settlement.
10. Orders to all levels of government to respect and honor the above privileges.

Sawatzky, H. <u>They Sought a Country</u>, p. 3.

## APPENDIX 2.

TABLE OF

CANADIAN MENNONITE POPULATION

and

WORLD MENNONITE POPULATION

## Mennonite Population of Canada in 1971

Census of Canada, 1971

TOTAL.....168,150

| | |
|---|---|
| Newfoundland | 45 |
| Prince Edward Island | 15 |
| Nova Scotia | 90 |
| New Brunswick | 90 |
| Quebec | 655 |
| Ontario | 40,115 |
| Manitoba | 58,555 |
| Saskatchewan | 26,315 |
| Alberta | 14,645 |
| British Columbia | 26,520 |
| Yukon | 55 |
| Northwest Territories | 45 |
| | 168,150 |

The discrepancy between the value for Canada in the following table and in the above can be explained by the difference between actual church membership and those considering themselves Mennonites.

## World Mennonite Membership as of 1958
from the Mennonite Yearbook and Directory for 1959

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Europe** | | **95,764** |
| Russia | 40,000* | |
| Holland | 39,000 | |
| Germany | 12,078 | |
| France | 2,700 | |
| Switzerland | 1,900 | |
| Sicily | 90 | |
| Luxembourg | 50 | |
| Belgium | 24 | |
| Austria | 12 | |
| | 95,764 | |
| **North America** | | **220,272** |
| United States | 159,445 | |
| Canada | 52,987 | |
| Mexico | 7,348 | |
| Honduras | 50 | |
| Puerto Rico | 365 | |
| Jamaica | 64 | |
| Cuba | 13 | |
| | 219,771 | |
| **Asia** | | **36,013** |
| India | 28,086 | |
| China | 4,000* | |
| Java | 3,343 | |
| Japan | 494 | |
| Formosa | 90 | |
| | 36,013 | |
| **Africa** | | **27,809** |
| Belgian Congo | 26,000 | |
| Tanganyika | 1,632 | |
| Ethiopia | 150 | |
| Ghana | 27 | |
| | 27,809 | |
| **South America** | | **10,639** |
| Paraguay | 6,189 | |
| Uruguay | 1,768 | |
| Brazil | 1,632 | |
| Argentina | 738 | |
| Colombia | 300 | |
| Bolivia | 12 | |
| | 10,639 | |

**Total World Mennonite Membership.....390,497**
**Including Children in the Total Membership.....520,000***

## APPENDIX 3.

JOHN LOWE'S LETTER
to the MENNONITE DELEGATION
of the INTENDING IMMIGRANTS

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Ottawa, 25th July, 1873

Gentlemen:

I have the honour, under the instruction of the Hon, the Minister of Agriculture, to state to you in reply to your letter of this day's date the following facts relating to advantages offered to settlers, and to the immunities offered to Mennonites which are established by Statute Law and by orders of his Excellency the Governor-General-in-Council for the information of German Mennonites having intention to emigrate to Canada via Hamburg.

1. An entire exemption from military service is by law and Order-in-Council granted to the Denomination of Christians called Mennonites.

2. An Order-in-Council was passed on the 3rd March last to reserve eight townships in the Province of Manitoba for free grants on the condition of settlement as provided in the Dominion Lands Act, that is to say, "Any person who is head of a family or has obtained the age of 21 years shall be entitled to be entered for ¼ section or a less quantity of unappropriated Dominion lands, for a purpose of securing a homestead right in respect thereof."

3. The said reserve of eight townships is for the exclusive use of the Mennonites, and the said free grants of ¼ section to consist of 160 acres each, as defined by the act.

4. Should the Mennonite Settlement extend beyond the eight townships set aside by the Order-in-Council of March 3rd last, other townships will be in the same way reserved to meet the full requirements of Mennonite immigration.

5. If next spring the Mennonite settlers on viewing the eight townships set aside for their use should decide to exchange them for any other unoccupied eight townships, such exchange will be allowed.

6. In addition to the free grant of ¼ section or 160 acres to every person over 21 years of age on the condition of settlement the right to purchase the remaining 3/4 of the section at $1.00 per acre is granted by law so as to complete the whole section of 640 acres which is the largest quantity of land the Government will grant a patent for to one person.

7. The settler will receive a patent for a free grant after three years residence in accordance with the terms of the Dominion Lands Act.

8. In event of the death of the settler, the lawful heirs can claim the patent for the free grant upon proof that settlement duties for three years have been performed.

9. From the moment of occupation the settler acquires a "homestead right" in the land.

10. The fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles is by law afforded to the Mennonites without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever, and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools.

11. The privilege of affirming instead of making affidavits is afforded by law.

12. The Government of Canada will undertake to furnish passenger warrants from Hamburg to Fort Garry for Mennonite families of good

characters for the sum of $30.00 for adult persons over the age of eight years, for persons under eight years half price or $15.00 and for infants under one year, $3.00.

13. The minister specially authorizes me to state that this arrangement as to price shall not be changed for the seasons of 1874, 1875, or 1876.

14. I am further to state that if it is changed thereafter the price shall not up to the year 1882 exceed $40.00 per adult and children in proportion, subject to the approval of Parliament.

15. The immigrants will be provided with provisions on the portion of the journey between Liverpool and Collingwood but between other portions of the journey they are to find their own provisions.

I have the honour to be,
Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
(Sgd.) John Lowe
Secretary, Department of
Agriculture

Messrs. David Klassen
Jacob Peters
Heinrich Wiebe
Cornelius Toews
Mennonite Delegates from Southern Russia

APPENDIX 4.

ORDER-IN-COUNCIL

JANUARY 23, 1895

*Ref. 374,008 on 370,476.*

# Extract from a Report of the Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency on the 23rd January, 1895.

P. C. No. 188.

On a Report dated 24th December, 1894, from the Minister of the Interior, stating that it has been represented to him, on behalf of the Mennonite Settlers in Manitoba, that their two Reserves in that Province are now over-crowded, owing partly to the influx of their fellow-countrymen from the United States and Europe, and partly to the natural increase which has taken place since their first settlement in Manitoba; and that, in order to meet the growing needs of their families, and to encourage the settlement of their fellow-countrymen in Canada, it becomes necessary for them to ask the Government to establish a Reservation for them from lands in the Prince Albert District.

The Minister further states that for this purpose they request that the even-numbered sections in the following Townships be reserved, viz.:—Townships 40, in Ranges 3, 4 and 5, and Township 41, in Range 4, all West of the 3rd Meridian.

The Minister observes that the principle of establishing reservations of land for settlement by Mennonites was first given effect to by an Order in Council of the 3rd of March, 1873, which set apart certain Townships East of the Red River, in the Province of Manitoba, for this purpose, and that a second Reserve for the same purpose was established West of the Red River by a subsequent Order in Council, dated the 25th of April, 1876. These two Reservations, however, included both the odd and even-numbered sections in the Townships set apart, whereas the present application asks for the reservation of the even-numbered sections only, the intention of the Mennonites being to arrange for the purchase of the odd-numbered sections from the Railway Company, for which they are now set apart as a subsidy.

The Minister further states that these people have prospered to a remarkable degree since their arrival in Manitoba, and have fulfilled with singular good faith all the obligations undertaken by them in that relation, repaying the advance of money made to them, with interest, to the last cent, and fully colonizing their Reservations with the choicest settlers. They represent that it is now their intention to assist with their own means their fellow-countrymen, in Europe and elsewhere, to remove to and settle upon the tract now applied for, and that fifty families, whom they expect in the Spring, will go direct to the proposed Reserve, if it be made available for the purpose.

The Minister is of the opinion that it is important, in the public interest, that the efforts of the Mennonites to induce the immigration of their friends in Europe and elsewhere to the North-West should be encouraged, and to do this it is necessary to give the intending settlers an assurance that they will be enabled to carry out the principles of their Social System, and to settle together in hamlets (for which provision is made by Section 37 of the Dominion Lands Act) by obtaining entries for contiguous lands.

The Minister, with this view, recommends that he be authorized to reserve for entry by Mennonites only, the even-numbered sections (exclusive of Hudson's Bay Company's Lands) in the following Townships, so far as they may be at the disposal of the Government, viz.:—Townships 40, in Ranges 3, 4 and 5, and Township 41, in Range 4, all West of the 3rd Meridian.

The Committee submit the foregoing for Your Excellency's approval.

(Signed) JOHN J. McGEE,

*Clerk of the Privy Council.*

To the Honourable

The Minister of the Interior.

*N. B.—Published in Canada Gazette of March 9th, 1895, Vol. 28, No. 36, for the fourth consecutive week.*

APPENDIX 5.

VILLAGE OF SCHOENFELD PETITION

136021

Schoenfeld, den 19 Februar 1912

Heute ist uns von der Gesellschaft [illegible] Ellwood, die uns [illegible] können in Dorfe bleiben, wenn wir 20 Heimstätten im Dorf wohnen, sind wir sind jetzt 20 Heimstätten zum Dorf Schoenfeld, auf Acklien 15 Ft 13, R 13, 3 Me... wurde uns sind die Namen der Heimstätten wie folgt aufschreiben, wo ist Landmann

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Isaak Buckert | S. | W. | ¼ | auf Sek. | 22 |
| Franz Buckert | S. | W. | ¼ | " Sek. | 22 |
| Heinrich Peters | S. | E. | ¼ | " Sek | 22 |
| Johan Krahn | S. | E | ¼ | " Sek | 22 |
| Jakob Lepke | S. | W. | ¼ | " Sek | 14 |
| Jakob Klassen | S. | W. | ¼ | " Sek | 14 |
| Gerhard Froese | S. | E. | ¼ | " Sek | 14 |
| Franz Berger | S. | E. | ¼ | " Sek | 10 |
| Jakob Krahn | S. | E. | ¼ | " Sek | 10 |
| Abraham Krahn | S. | W. | ¼ | " Sek | 10 |
| Bernhard Ens | S. | W. | ¼ | " Sek | 10 |
| Johan Letkeman | S. | E. | ¼ | " Sek | 16 |
| Bernhard Buckert | S. | W. | ¼ | " Sek | 16 |
| Bernhard Fortzon | S. | W. | ¼ | " Sek | 16 |
| Franz Ens | S. | E. | ¼ | " Sek | 16 |
| Abraham Peters | S. | E. | ¼ | " Sek | 4 |
| Peter H Buckert | S. | E. | ¼ | " Sek | 4 |
| Johan Teichreb | S. | E. | ¼ | " Sek | 20 |
| Jakob Friesen | S. | W. | ¼ | " Sek | 28 |
| Bernhard B Ens | S. | XX | ¼ | " Sek | 28 |

Bernhard

Swift Current

TO THE HONORABLE

THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR,

OTTAWA,

THE HUMBLE PETITION of the undersigned members of the Reinland Mennonite Association showeth as follows,-

1.- On the Thirteenth day of August, A. D. 1904, by an Order-in-Council all the odd and even numbered sections remaining at the disposal of the Government within Townships 13 and 14 in Range 12, Townships 12, 13 and 14 in Range 13 and the East halves of Townships 12 and 13 in Range 14 all West of the Third Meridian were set aside as a reserve for the establishment of a colony by the Reinland Mennonite Association.

2.- Owing to the semi-arid nature of the district in which the present Reserve is situated and the difficulty of procuring a satisfactory supply of water for domestic and farm purposes, and the consequent necessity of digging or boring deep wells, building dams on creeks or digging artificial ponds to provide a water supply, your petitioners have found it to be a great advantage to settle in a hamlet, and they have accordingly located and established a hamlet on Section 15 in Township 13 in Range 13 which they have named Schoenfeld.

3.- Your petitioners are the homesteaders of the lands

set opposite their respective names and are now actually resident in the said Hamlet of Schoenfeld on said Section 15.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE PRAY that they may be permitted to perform their homestead duties on the hamlet system as provided in "The Dominion Lands Act".

And your petitioners will ever pray.

Dated this Thirty-first day of May, A. D. 1907, at the Hamlet of Schoenfeld in Saskatchewan.

APPENDIX 6.

VILLAGE OF CHORTITZ AGREEMENT

The deed of authority by the members of the Mennonite Church of the village of Chortitz was as:

Martin Klassen
William Bjornson
Gerhard Unger

all of Chortitz, farmers in or about the years 1905 and 1906, made entry with the Department of the Interior in Ottawa for a grant of homestead lands covering the northwest and northeast quarters of Section 19 in Township 13, Range 12 West of the Third Meridian in Saskatchewan. Whereas the whole duties due on said land be performed and all payments due have been made and whereas it is desired that the title should be issued to the trusties aforementioned to be held for joint use of the whole village of Mennonites at Chortitz in Saskatchewan. Therefore, the undersigned being the whole adult males of this said village and as such the whole persons interested in the said land, hereby declare as follows:

1. We, the undersigned, have each subscribed these presents after hearing the same read and fully explained.
2. Do declare that we are each of us duly admitted members of the Mennonite Church and inhabitants of the village of Chortitz and are each of us the full age of twenty-one years and that besides us there are no other parties having any proprietory interests in or claim upon the said land or any part thereof.
3. We severally declare that the whole duties whether of cultivation or otherwise required to be performed on and the monies to be required to be paid for the said lands have been duly performed and paid.
4. We have duly met and resolved that the said land shall be from now and for all time remain and be for the joint use of the members of the Mennonite Church of the village of Chortitz in Saskatchewan and for them only and to secure this, we hereby unanimously adopt the following rules and bylaws:

(a) Every male person who is regularly admitted to the Mennonite Church and who is a permanent member of the village of Chortitz in Saskatchewan shall on reaching the full age of twenty-one years becoming ipso facto invested in joint equal undivided share and interest in the land and property of whatever kind belonging to the said village, but when he should leave the said village or cease to be a member of the said church his said share or interest shall be at once lapsed and fall into the common share of the remaining members without any claim whatsoever being competent to the said member for compensation of any kind.

(b) On the death of any member, his share or interest shall likewise lapse and fall into the common share of the remaining members and no claim shall be competent to the estate of the deceased member or to any member whose relatives, retrospect of such share or interest.

(c) The Church and its authorities as by the usage established shall have full control over its members and there shall be no appeal from the decisions of the Church. It may expel any member according to its rule or usage whether present or future and it may alter its creed formularities or rules and conditions of membership from time to time.

(d) The trustees aforementioned shall hold office during life or until they shall replaced as aforementioned.
(e) A meeting of all the persons interested hereunder shall be called when summoned by at least five members who shall give sufficient written notice to each of the other persons interested, formality of any such notice being waived in the case of such members who do actually attend. Such meeting may by two-thirds majority appoint new trustees, elect new members, make new rules, and otherwise manage the land and conducr the business of the community.
(f) The foreman of the village shall keep a book in which he shall enter the proceedings at such meetings and shall regularly chronicle all changes in the persons interested whether by addition or by loss.

5. The undersigned also declare that they have elected and appointed and do by these presents elect and appoint Peter Harms and Abraham Friesen to be the trustees of the said land for the purposes herein mentioned to hold office as aforesaid.

6. The said Peter Harms and Abraham Friesen by their signature hereto do accept the office of trustees for the purposes and under the conditions herein mentioned. The whole subscribes hereto do hereby authorize and request Secretary of State for the Interior to issue patents to the said Peter Harms and Abraham Friesen as trustees aforesaid and hereby bind themselves to regard such grant as being made to each and everyone of the said subscribers, dated at Chortitz the 30th day of June, A.D. 1914, signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of:

Isaac Klassen
Jacob A. Knelson
Abraham Friesen
Whilhelm Friesen
Jacob Unger
Cornelius G. Froese
Whilhelm Fehr
Peter Wolf
Peter Harms
Gerhard Hind
Jacob Friesen
Isaac Klassen
Jacob Klassen
Isaac Martens
Cornelius Remple
Jacob D. Teichroeb
Herman Fehr
John E. Wiebe

Commisioner of Oaths
sgn. G. C. Thompson